THE SETTLEMENT OF THE OLD NORTHWEST: ETHNIC PLURALISM IN A FEATURELESS PLAIN

Robert P. Swierenga

Migration created the Old Northwest. In 1787 there were almost no permanent American settlements in the "Ohio country," but by 1860 nearly a quarter of the United States population (seven million persons) lived there and the population center of the nation was located near Chillicothe, Ohio. Before 1840 most of the newcomers came from the older states but thereafter large families and foreign immigration boosted the total. Foreigners accounted for 79 percent of the net migration into the Old Northwest in the 1840s and a whopping 88 percent in the 1850s.

This explosive settlement of the Old Northwest, America's first landed empire, was stimulated and shaped by the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. The land act and its numerous permutations encouraged rapid settlement by providing secure land titles for unlimited purchases of blocs of land. The land laws were also sufficiently flexible to allow for individual and group settlements. Immigrants who had for centuries clustered in their

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1 Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North (Ames, Iowa 1987), 72.

European farm villages could settle in compact groups and transplant their communal institutions.

The Northwest Ordinance ensured a uniform governmental system and guaranteed eventual statehood, although the territorial governments were more authoritarian than most settlers wanted. Congress put the territories on a short leash because easterners held a jaundiced view of early settlers; they were, in Jefferson's words, "halfway between savages and tractable people." The French Canadians who were scattered throughout the region, it was thought, preferred their traditional autocracy. Thus, both American and Canadian pioneer settlers required an indeterminate apprenticeship into the mysteries of republican government.3

The ordinance also encouraged settlement because it provided some of the features of a bill of rights, including freedom of religion, sanctity of private contracts, and partible inheritance (in place of primogeniture); it encouraged education; it promised to apply the Golden Rule in Indian relations; it guaranteed freedom of transit on the Mississippi, Ohio, and St. Lawrence river systems; and, most importantly, it prohibited slavery.4 All of the provisions, but particularly the ban on slavery which was carried over into the state constitutions, were critically important in attracting European immigrants to the Old Northwest.5


4 A fresh interpretation is Peter S. Onuf, Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance (Bloomington and Indianapolis 1987); and Onuf, The Origins of the Federal Republic: Jurisdictional Controversies in the United States, 1775-1787 (Philadelphia 1983). As Paul Finkelman has argued, the slavery ban was not ironclad during the territorial period, especially in Illinois Territory. See Finkelman, "Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance: A Study in Ambiguity," Journal of the Early Republic, 6 (Winter 1986), 343-370. For a contrasting view that stresses the ideological consequences of the free soil proviso, see David Brion Davis, "The Significance of Excluding Slavery from the Old Northwest in 1787," Indiana Magazine of History, 84 (Mar. 1988), 75-89, esp. 83-87. This entire issue is devoted to articles analyzing the Northwest Ordinance.

5 Other factors were climate, fertile soils, and the prominence of the New York port of entry and the Erie Canal route inland.
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For many years the common perception of the Old Northwest was that its population, although initially diverse, melded into a homogeneous society. A Federal Writers Project pamphlet published by the Northwest Territory Celebration Commission in 1937, on the 150th anniversary of the ordinance, said it best:

The name “Old Northwest” implies that the five states included in it share a common historical and social background. . . . [T]here are wide variations of geographic and economic conditions; yet the teeming millions who now inhabit this region are conscious of an identity of interests, and of a common outlook upon life, which gives to this section an individuality as distinct as that possessed by the people of New England, or of the Old South. Any explanation of this individuality [the authors concluded] leads inevitably to the Ordinance of 1787.6

The noted historian Joseph Schafer, editor of the Wisconsin Magazine of History, stated in 1937 that the grandchildren of immigrants in Wisconsin were “thoroughly indoctrinated and permanently habituated Americans” who were “for the most part indistinguishable from old-line Americans.”7 William N. Parker, a leading American economic historian, described the frontier population of the Old Northwest as living under conditions that were “remarkably homogeneous.”8

In the 1970s, however, Americans rediscovered ethnicity. No longer do scholars assume a homogeneous society, especially in urban America. Nevertheless, the foreign-born in rural society are yet largely overlooked, on the mistaken notion that they assimilated more rapidly into the dominant Anglo-American society than did their city cousins.9

Although the agricultural frontier of the Old Northwest may have had a prosaic sameness, the peopling of that frontier is a fascinating

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6 Northwest Territory Celebration Commission, History of the Ordinance of 1787 and the Old Northwest Territory (Marietta, Ohio 1937), 75.
7 Joseph Schafer, “Editorial Comment: Peopling the Middle West,” Wisconsin Magazine of History 21 (Sept. 1937), 100.
and points west. In 1816 the oldest son, John, and several cousins set out for the Genesee country of New York where they joined relatives. Within a decade thirteen of John's fourteen siblings, all married, had relocated in the Genesee Valley with their families. By 1834 one of John's younger brothers, Arvin Olin, began another migration by moving with his wife and eleven children to Ohio's Western Reserve, where Arvin's uncle had previously settled. Over the next five years, eight of Arvin's siblings, plus his parents, left New York for Ohio. In 1850 several Olins moved to the Kalamazoo, Michigan, area and a third migration stage began. In the end, the first and second generation families made a combined total of three hundred moves, but always clustering in the three core homestead areas.

The Kellogg family of Canaan, Connecticut, provides a similar example.17 Austin Kellogg migrated to Kenosha, Wisconsin, in 1835 and a year later his brother Thaddeus and his family followed. Within a year more Kellogs left Connecticut for Kellogg's Corners, as the new settlement in Racine County was named. There were Uncle Seth and Uncle Chauncey, with their families, plus the four grandparents of the Kellogg and Howe lines. The extended clan customarily gathered for prayers in each other's homes each evening after the dishes were cleaned.

Charting these in-migration streams is no small task, but it is a greater challenge to follow the complex cultural developments in the new country resulting from the interactions of the various cultural groups. Some of the cultural conflicts in the Old Northwest are legendary: the Yankee-southern rivalry in the Indiana-Illinois cornbelt, the Yankee-German struggle for supremacy in Wisconsin, and the Yankee-French Canadian conflict in Michigan.18 In all areas, traditional-

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16 Robert M. Taylor, Jr., "The Olin Tribe: Migration, Mutual Aid, and Solidarity of a Nineteenth Century Rural American Kin Group" (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University 1979), 24-86.
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ists tried to ward off modernizers and immigrants struggled to preserve their identity. The major immigrant groups truly sought after and held on to land. Germans and Scandinavians were greatly over-represented in agriculture in 1910—the Germans by 50 percent and the Scandinavians by more than 100 percent. The degree to which the varying cultural backgrounds of the immigrants actually affected their farming and land inheritance practices has only recently been systematically studied. While farming practices apparently differed little from native-born farmers in the same area, there were cultural "survivals," especially among strongly church-centered ethnic groups.

Linguists and cultural geographers have found that the first settlers imprinted an indelible stamp on frontier communities that latecomers, even in large numbers, displaced only partially after many generations. Given that fact, it is necessary to describe the migration fields of the Old Northwest pioneers. Since the region was open for settlement before European immigration began in earnest in the 1840s, the first wave of settlers were Americans from the older states.

The predominant native-born settlers of the Old Northwest hailed from three of the four major cultural-linguistic regions in the United States in 1790: New England, Midland, and Upland Southern. Lowland southerners stayed below the Mason-Dixon line. The New England or Yankee cultural region included nuclear New England plus the zone of primary expansion into New York. The Midland subculture, based in the Delaware and Susquehanna valleys, included the Mid-Atlantic states. The Upland South included the Piedmont, Blue Ridge, and Shenandoah Valley, as well as the Appalachian and Interior Low plateaus.

The general migration paths of the native-born into the Old Northwest are quite distinct and follow the three principal western

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20 John F. Rooney, Jr., Wilbur Zelinsky, and Dean R. Louder, eds., This Remarkable Continent: An Atlas of United States and Canadian Society and Cultures (College Station, Tex. 1982), 10-11; Zelinsky, Cultural Geography, 117-129. See also Mitchell, "Formation of Early American Cultural Regions" 72-74, who developed the concept of regional "way stations" or intermediate areas in the earliest trans-Appalachian frontiers after 1776, where pioneer settlers experienced cultural fusions which they later brought into the Ohio country. Such way stations are the "Burned Over" District of western New York and northeastern Ohio and the Middle Ohio Valley of southwestern Ohio.
Upland southerners crossed the Cumberland Gap and traveled the Wilderness Road and Nashville-Saline Trail or the southern tributaries of the Ohio River (the Tennessee, Cumberland, and Kentucky rivers) into southern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Midlanders entered the central region via the National Road and Ohio River. Yankees reached the northernmost parts by following the Erie Canal and Great Lakes. Yankees also settled northeastern Ohio and the southern portions of Michigan and Wisconsin by the same routes (see Figure 1).

In addition to the four culture zones of the native-born in 1790, there were five major (white) foreign-born nationalities in the thirteen original states. The English, who comprised over eighty percent of all foreign-born, were interspersed from Massachusetts to North Carolina; the Scotch-Irish preferred Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina; Germans were concentrated in Pennsylvania; the Dutch settled in New York; and the Irish were widely scattered. Of these foreign-born groups, the English, Scotch-Irish, and Germans had the greatest influence in the Old Northwest.

The population influx into each of the five states of the Old Northwest differed, although each followed the customary pattern of latitude-specific migration and selective settlement. Ohio, the first settled, set the pattern. In the first decade of settlement, upland southerners from the Virginia Panhandle and Kentucky crossed the Ohio River into southern Ohio. Uplanders became the most numerous and influential element in early Ohio. But soon southern Pennsylvania became the beehive of Ohio's midsection. By 1850, over 200,000 Pennsylvanians, mainly Germans and Scotch-Irish, had swarmed into Ohio, where they comprised 43 percent of all migrants. This was twice as many as any other state and three times those of New Enganders. The Pennsylvania influence in Ohio was even greater before 1850, since many of the Ohio-born were children of Pennsylvania migrants. The primary zone of Pennsylvania Germans

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21 A detailed map showing the major transportation routes to frontier Indiana is in Rose, "Hoosier Origins," 227.
22 I deliberately omit Afro-Americans, who comprised a major immigrant group that dominated several southern states and had a sizable presence in the mid-Atlantic states.
and points west. In 1816 the oldest son, John, and several cousins set out for the Genesee country of New York where they joined relatives. Within a decade thirteen of John's fourteen siblings, all married, had relocated in the Genesee Valley with their families. By 1834 one of John's younger brothers, Arvin Olin, began another migration by moving with his wife and eleven children to Ohio's Western Reserve, where Arvin's uncle had previously settled. Over the next five years, eight of Arvin's siblings, plus his parents, left New York for Ohio. In 1850 several Olins moved to the Kalamazoo, Michigan, area and a third migration stage began. In the end, the first and second generation families made a combined total of three hundred moves, but always clustering in the three core homestead areas.16

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16 Robert M. Taylor, Jr., "The Olin Tribe: Migration, Mutual Aid, and Solidarity of a Nineteenth Century Rural American Kin Group" (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University 1979), 24-86.


Figure 1

Traditional Rural Culture Regions of the Eastern and Central United States. This regionalization of the eastern half of the United States is concerned solely with rural populations and their cultural configurations. The date would seem to be the early twentieth century.

was the north-central "Backbone" area while the Scotch-Irish were more attracted to the Miami Valley of southwestern Ohio. The Old German region of central Ohio is marked by Pennsylvania Dutch barns with their familiar overhang construction and spires of the Evangelical United Brethren churches.

Unlike the midlanders and southerners, New Englanders in Ohio became concentrated in one area—the Connecticut Western Reserve and the Erie Firelands on the north coast, where nearly sixty percent of all Yankees in the state lived in 1850. This was the most homogeneous New England settlement in the Old Northwest and it enabled the Ohio Yankees to achieve a greater cultural and political influence in the Buckeye State than their numbers warranted. Yankees were also better educated and wealthier than southerners.

Antebellum Ohio never became a prime receiving area for foreigners. In 1850 only ten percent of Ohioans were foreign-born. Those who came were widely dispersed in isolated, spatially distinct settlements, although some were contiguous to or overlapped with other groups. Wilhelm's 1850 population census map of Ohio (Figure 2) identified more than one hundred ethnic and cultural enclaves. Half of the foreign-born in Ohio were German, a quarter Irish, an eighth English, and the rest were French, Canadian, Welsh, Scotch, and Dutch. Nearly one third of Ohio immigrants in 1850 lived in Cincinnati and Hamilton County, but by 1880 Cleveland and Cuyahoga County became the leading immigrant center with 35 percent of the population foreign-born. Only eight Ohio counties ranked above the average of foreign-born in the entire Old Northwest in 1880; five of these bordered Lake Erie from Cleveland to Toledo, one was Hamilton County (Cincinnati), and two were mainly British-born counties on the Pennsylvania border at Warren and Youngstown (Figure 3).

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25 Ibid., 93-94.
26 Eugene H. Roseboom and Francis P. Weisenburger, eds., A History of Ohio (Columbus 1967), 115; Chaddock, Ohio Before 1850, 41.
Figure 2
Origin of Settlement Groups in Rural Ohio, 1850


The German and Irish immigrants came initially in the 1830s to hire on with the Ohio and Miami canal projects and then they settled along the canal routes. But over time Germans settled mainly among their Pennsylvania Dutch ancestors in east-central Ohio, from which they opened the fertile flat lands of the northwestern and west-central
Figure 3
Percentage of Foreign-Born in Ohio, 1880


counties that had been avoided because of drainage problems. The noted German immigrant towns in Ohio were New Bremen and Minster in Auglaize County (interestingly, the former was entirely Protestant and the latter was Catholic). Among large cities, Cincinnati
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became synonymous with German settlement. Between 1830 and 1900, the proportion of Germans in the Queen City grew from 5 to 40 percent.\(^9\)

Indiana, like Ohio, had an even stronger southern heritage as well as the smallest immigrant population. Only 6 percent were foreign-born in 1850, compared to 11 percent in Ohio, 13 percent in Illinois, 14 percent in Michigan, and 36 percent in Wisconsin (Table 1). Indiana’s proportion of foreign-born peaked in 1860 at 9 percent and declined gradually thereafter. Ohio similarly peaked in 1860 and 1870 at a low 14 percent. Illinois and Michigan were in the 19-24 percent range and Wisconsin was highest at 31-36 percent. Inhabitants with foreign parentage were also sparse in Indiana and Ohio; in 1870 one in five residents of Indiana and one in three of Ohio had one or both parents of foreign birth. This compares with foreign parentage of 39, 41, and 68 percent, respectively, in Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Indiana’s proportion was thus only half as large as Ohio’s and only one fifth as large as Wisconsin’s.

Early Indiana was also strikingly different because its frontier expanded diagonally from southeast to northwest.\(^10\) Upland southerners, the original Hoosiers, entirely dominated the southern half of the state and they controlled Indiana’s government for several generations. Yankees moved into the northernmost tier of counties, but not in large numbers. In 1850 fewer than 3 percent of non-native Indiana residents were of New England-New York stock compared to 10 percent in the Old Northwest as a whole. Midlanders settled in the northern third and the southeastern corner of the state, but again not in large numbers. In 1850 fewer than 20 percent of non-natives in Indiana were midlanders, compared with 42 percent for the entire Northwest. Hence, Yankees were underrepresented by one third and midlanders by one half, whereas southerners were overrepresented by more than one half. They comprised 44 percent of Indiana non-natives, compared to 28 percent in the whole North-

\(^11\) Ibid., 212, 214.
Table 1
Native and Foreign-born Population in the Old Northwest, 1850 – 1880 (in 1,000s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1860</th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1880</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Foreign Born</td>
<td>% FB</td>
<td>Native Born</td>
</tr>
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<td>1,733</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2,011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1,232</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1,387</td>
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<tr>
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<td>340</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>499</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>3,917</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5,729</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Inhabitants with foreign parentage (either father, mother, or both), which are included in these totals, are: Ohio 850, 32%; Ind. 341, 20%; Ill. 986, 39%; Mich. 488, 41%; Wisc. 718, 68%.

+ The 1880 census report provides data on foreign parentage for a sample of 35 states, which includes only Wisconsin for the states of the Old Northwest. The number of children of foreign immigrants in Wisconsin in 1880 was 450,000, or 49 percent of the native-born.

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Because of the early southern dominance in Indiana, Yankees and midlanders as well as European immigrants largely bypassed the state. In 1880, only four counties had more immigrants than the average of 17 percent for the entire Northwest. Three of the counties skirted the shore of Lake Michigan and one (Vanderburgh) was on the Ohio River at Evansville (Figure 4). Germans dominated these counties and statewide over half of Indiana's foreign-born were Germans in 1880 (Table 2). Upland southerners thus remained culturally dominant and their impact even exceeded their numbers because of the law of "first effective settlement." Southerners created an entrenched Hoosier culture that predominated in speech and dialect patterns, religious affiliation, house and barn architecture, and farming practices. Despite their energy, the later arriving Yankees and midlanders could not obliterate that imprint, as they did in much of Ohio.

Indiana's center was the most interesting cultural area. It was a transitional zone where southerners and midlanders both intermingled. The traditional view was that Pennsylvanians entered the area via the National Road after uplanders were well established there, and that the two cultures were intermixed. But new linguistic evidence and studies of folkways indicate that the upland southerners had already acquired a mixed culture before settling in central Indiana. Before entering Indiana, these Kentucky and Virginia natives had used Cincinnati's hinterland in the Miami and Whitewater valleys as a staging area. Here they had intermingled with midland settlers, especially Pennsylvanians, and created a unique Ohio Valley culture in the years 1800-1815. This cultural amalgam blended southern subsistence farming and northern commercial agriculture into the fabled corn-hog economy. Since Cincinnati was the jumping off point for the expansion of uplanders into central Indiana, the hybrid Ohio Valley culture became the mother culture there.32

Southern Illinois, like southern Indiana, was at the end of the Ohio River corridor by which upland southerners from Kentucky and Tennessee advanced northward in large numbers. When Illinois entered the Union in 1818, two thirds of its residents were southern, and the ratio did not change until after 1830.33 As late as 1850, 90

Figure 4
Percentage of Foreign-Born in Indiana, 1880

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## Table 2

### Foreign-Born Population in the Old Northwest, 1880, by State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nativity</th>
<th>Ohio</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Ind.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Ill.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Mich.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Wis.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>United States</th>
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<td>4.3</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2,608</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4,601</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>38,663</td>
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<td>754</td>
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<td>503</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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<td>9.4</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>5,267</td>
<td>34.6</td>
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<td>306</td>
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<td>4.7</td>
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<td>0.9</td>
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<td>9.4</td>
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<td>1,175</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>237,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>394,943</td>
<td>114,178</td>
<td>503,576</td>
<td>383,528</td>
<td>403,425</td>
<td>6,679,943</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Compendium of the Tenth Census* (Washington 1884), I, Table XXI, 332-333; Table XXX, 482-487; Table XXXI, 499-540.
percent of all native-born (excluding Illinois-born) in the eleven-county Shawnee Hills region of southern Illinois were southerners. Upland southerners also penetrated farther northward and in greater numbers than is commonly recognized. Figure 5 indicates that the sphere of influence of uplanders, who were the core group in southern Illinois and the dominant group in the central counties, even reached into north-central Illinois by 1850. But uplanders avoided the northern region, which became a Yankee core zone centering in Chicago. Hence, Illinois had a very distinct north-south dichotomy between upland southern and New England clusters. Midlanders from Ohio and Pennsylvania formed a wedge in central Illinois between the two core areas. In this transitional zone, midlanders and southerners intermingled, especially in the south-central counties, but to the north the boundary was very abrupt between midlanders and Yankees.\footnote{Meyer, "Southern Illinois Migration Fields," 153; John Hudson, "Yankeeland in the Middle West," 195-205.}
SETTLEMENT OF THE OLD NORTHWEST

Microscopic analyses of the Illinois settlement patterns at the regional and county level reveal the usual channelized population flows and spatial clustering that migration scholars have come to expect. Certain Illinois counties or blocks of counties attracted a disproportionate number of immigrants from particular southern source areas. Tennessee and Kentucky links were very pronounced in southern Illinois; and New England, New York, and Ohio migration fields can be found in the Illinois Military Tract and elsewhere. Even long-distance channels existed. For example, Germans from two North Carolina counties were concentrated in Union County, Illinois, in the 1820s and 1830s.35

Given these initial settlement patterns, Illinois, like Indiana and Ohio, for generations was polarized culturally between southern traditionalists and Yankee modernizers. The southerners practiced subsistence agriculture and "rejected reform or innovation of any sort," according to Richard Jensen, but the Yankees engaged in commercial farming and, through their "ambition, hard work, and shrewd bargains," became the leading industrial and financial entrepreneurs of the state. By 1870, Yankee farmers were worth fifty percent more than other farmers, and the wealth of southern farmers was only half the state average.36 Yankees not only preferred Illinois above all the states in the Old Northwest, but they came to dominate the state culturally, economically, and politically. In Stewart Holbrook's words: "For every Yankee who stopped in Indiana, approximately four Yankees passed into Michigan, eight into Illinois, six into Wisconsin, half a dozen more into Minnesota."

Illinois was also hospitable to foreigners, who comprised one fifth of the population between 1860 and 1880. Another two fifths were children of foreign immigrants (Table 1). As Figure 6 shows, the foreign-born were concentrated in the northern third of the state, particularly in Cook, Will, and surrounding counties. Forty percent of Cook County inhabitants in 1880 were foreign-born, led by Germans (93,000) and Irish (50,000), with lesser numbers of Scandinavians, English, and Canadians. A secondary immigrant region was a five-county area around St. Louis, which was also

37 Holbrook, Yankee Exodar, 64, but unfortunately there is no documentation.
Figure 6
Percentage of Foreign-Born in Illinois, 1880

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heavily German. German farmers were dispersed along a diagonal corridor between St. Louis and Chicago. Illinois thus became the center for German-American culture, anchored in Chicago and St. Louis. In 1880, Germans comprised 40 percent of the foreign-born in Illinois, Irish were 20 percent, British 13 percent, and Scandinavians (Denmark, Norway, Sweden) 11 percent (Table 2).

While the southern half of Michigan and Wisconsin became Yankeeland, the dominant settlers of the northern reaches, initially called the "Siberia of Michigan," were French Canadians from the St. Lawrence River valley. The Canadians also penetrated into the mid-sections of both states where they intermingled with Yankees. French Canadians particularly dominated the Detroit area of southeastern Michigan. As a result, a deep antagonism developed in Michigan between Yankees and Canadians. The French Catholic culture was traditional, land rooted, and convivial; the Yankee Protestants were modern, rationalist, and ascetic. So Michigan had competing traditional and modern-oriented cultures that resembled the Yankee-southern rift in Illinois.

Wisconsin also had a cultural conflict between moderns and traditionals. Joseph Schafer, director of the Wisconsin Historical Society and the father of Wisconsin history, in a famous series of articles in the 1920s entitled "The Yankee and the Teuton in Wisconsin," described how the Yankees, "imaginative and space-free," were risk takers and highly mobile, eager to open large, mechanized wheat farms in the interior and to welcome new transportation improvements. The Germans, by contrast, huddled in the forests near Lake Michigan ports where they slowly "cleared" their modest-sized farms, always cautious about debt and averse to speculation. "His land was his home," said Schafer, and his ancestral estate was a "sacred trust" to be expanded but never sold. When Wisconsin wheat farming failed, Yankee farmers moved west in search of new wheat lands, but German farmers with their diversified, intensive cropping hung on and carried the state's economy until dairying cooperatives developed. The plodding turtle saved the hare from disaster.

Cultural dividing lines in Michigan and Wisconsin ran along longitudinal as well as latitudinal lines. Michigan's Lake Huron

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39 Formisano, Birth of Mass Political Parties, 179; Fuller, Economic and Social Beginnings of Michigan, 95-183.
region to the east was Canadian while the Lake Michigan region to the west was Yankee. In southern Wisconsin, Yankees dominated the region east of Madison to Lake Michigan while midlanders settled to the west in the Mississippi River Valley. The latter was an expansion of the midland zone in northwestern Illinois stretching west across central Iowa into Kansas.

Another distinct phenomenon of settlement in the northland was the higher number of foreign immigrants in the upper Great Lakes. The frontier ran northward after 1840 because that was the cheap land area. Between 1860 and 1880 one third of Wisconsin's population and nearly one quarter of Michigan's was foreign-born. If the second generation is included, Michigan had 41 percent and Wisconsin a whopping 68 percent of its population of foreign stock (Table 1). The foreign-born in Wisconsin were spread evenly throughout the state (Figure 7). Only four counties in 1880 recorded fewer than 20 percent foreign-born. They were in the southwestern corner and in the extreme north, which regions generally had fewer immigrants than in the eastern half of the state. In Michigan the foreign-born were concentrated in the "thumb area" of Lake Huron, along Saginaw Bay and the northeastern quarter, and in the Upper Peninsula (Figure 8). Germans were the dominant group in Wisconsin, as were French Canadians (and later English Canadians) in Michigan. In Wisconsin in 1880, 45 percent of all foreign-born were Germans, mainly Prussians, and in Michigan 39 percent of foreigners were Canadians. Scandinavians made up the second largest group in Wisconsin at 16 percent followed by Irish at 10 percent. In Michigan, Germans ranked second (23 percent) followed by English at 14 percent and Irish at 11 percent (Table 2).

The spatial distribution of the immigrant population at the sub-county level has not been mapped over time in much of the Old Northwest. In the few systematic microstudies that have been

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12 Hudson, "Yankeeland in the Middle West," 196 (Figure 1).
13 Zelinsky, Cultural Geography, 32-33, 133-134. Mapping the rural ethnic neighborhoods, says Zelinsky (134), "remains an imposing agenda of unfinished business." But John Hudson's innovative "thermic" statistical mapping of birthplace data derived from a large sample of midwestern county histories and biographical directories holds out the promise of such detailed mapping. See Hudson, "North American Origins," for the most extensive application of this technique.
Figure 7
Percentage of Foreign-Born in Wisconsin, 1880

Figure 8
Percentage of Foreign-Born in Michigan, 1880

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done, however, clustered ethnic settlements are readily identified. The Ohio picture, which revealed numerous little Germanies and little Switzerlands, has already been noted (Figure 2). William Bowen’s map of the dominant migrant group in each Wisconsin county, according to the 1880 census, shows Germans dominated the eastern half of the state and Scandinavians the western half. Merle Curti’s census analysis of Trempealeau County on the Mississippi River in southwestern Wisconsin in the mid-nineteenth century uncovered, among others, Scotch, Polish, and Norwegian communities. Ronald Formisano, in his ethnicultural analyses of Michigan voting behavior in the mid-nineteenth century, also identified numerous ethnic settlements. Pennsylvania Germans were prominent in Addison (Oakland County), Noble (Branch County), and Bertrand (Berrien County). Old Dutch Reformed from New York were concentrated in Ridgeway and Macon (Lenawee County). Vermontville (Eaton County) was a “pure” Yankee New England town of Vermonters, while French Canadian communities were in Mendon (St. Joseph County), Ignace and Moran townships (Mackinac County), Hamtramck and Frenchtown (Monroe County), Ecorse (Wayne County), and Ira Township (St. Clair County). The latter two were over fifty percent French Canadian. George Fuller, an early Michigan historian, surveyed the population of frontier Michigan and noted numerous ethnic communities. There was a Scotch colony in Bruce township and a German colony just outside of Mt. Clemens, both in Macomb County; other Scotch colonies were at West Bloomfield and Highland and a Canadian center in Avon township, all in Lenawee County; an English colony was in Independence township (Oakland County), a Quaker colony at Penn township (Cass County), a German Catholic village of Westphalia township (Clinton County), and others at White Pigeon and just west of Ann Arbor. This recital could continue indefinitely. The Old Northwest, like so much of the northern United States, was a polyglot of transplanted communities. So regular was the inland migration process that, says John Hudson, “it is possible to predict

——— Bowen, “American Ethnic Regions, 1880,” 45 (Figure 1).
——— Formisano, Birth of Mass Political Parties, 168-173.
——— Fuller, Economic and Social Beginnings in Michigan, 183-185, 238-242, 301-304, 362-363.
with specified accuracy where a typical pioneer settler of a given county was born simply on the basis of the county's location. 448

The settlement patterns of the Dutch, a group that I have studied extensively, exemplify the process of transplanting. 49 The Dutch are a relatively small group. Only 300,000 Netherlanders came to the United States in the great century of migration, 1820-1923, where they favored the Old Northwest; three times as many settled in this region as in the nation as a whole between 1870 and 1910. More than half (55 percent) of the Dutch in the United States in these years lived in the Old Northwest—their numbers increased to 60,000 in 1910. Michigan, with 33,000 Dutch-born in 1910, had almost three times more than any other state; Illinois was second with 14,000.

Table 3
Dutch-Born in the Old Northwest by State, 1850 – 1880

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ill.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Ind.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Mich.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Ohio</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Wisc.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>3114</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>1416</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6335</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>1756</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>4906</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>4180</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2558</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>5990</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>5012</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>1368</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>17177</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>2455</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5698</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Decennial U.S. population censuses, 1850 – 1880. The published figures for 1850 for Illinois (226), Michigan (2,542), and Wisconsin (1,157) undercount the Dutch-born by 966. The table uses figures compiled by the author from the manuscript population censuses in Robert P. Swierenga, comp., Dutch Households in the U.S. Population Censuses, 1850, 1860, and 1870: An Alphabetical Listing by Family Heads and Singles (Wilmington, Del. 1987).

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The Dutch were more rural than other immigrant nationalities, except Norwegians, Finns, and Danes. (The percentage rural in 1920 was, respectively, Norwegians 53, Finns and Danes 47, and Dutch 44.) Grand Rapids and Chicago were the primary Dutch urban centers. Nearly 12 percent of all Dutch in the United States in 1900 lived in Grand Rapids (another 5 percent lived in nearby Muskegon and Kalamazoo), and 9 percent were in Chicago.

The Dutch immigrants in the Midwest were from the lower rungs of society who had the most to gain by leaving their homeland. They were almost all peasant folk—rural laborers, farmers, village craftsmen, and mechanics in rural industry—who moved with their families in the hope of becoming independent farmers in America. These were people of low to middling economic status in the Netherlands; a fifth had actually been on the public dole. Religiously, 80 percent were Protestant Calvinists and 20 percent were Roman Catholics. Among the Protestants, nearly a quarter were ultra-Calvinists—Seceders from the national Reformed church who suffered bitter government suppression and social and economic discrimination. Beginning in 1846, thousands of Seceders immigrated to America for religious freedom, led by their dominies. Frequently, entire congregations migrated together. More than ten times as many Seceders departed the fatherland as their share of the population.

The Netherlands lived mostly in clustered settlements. In 1870, 25 years after immigration began in earnest, 60 percent of all the Dutch in America lived in only 22 counties in seven midwestern and two mid-Atlantic states. The primary settlement field was within a 50-mile radius of Lake Michigan—from Muskegon, Grand Rapids, Holland, and Kalamazoo on the east shore to Chicago, Milwaukee, Sheboygan, and Green Bay on the west shore. The major colony was in southwestern Michigan, centering around the village of Holland in Ottawa County on Lake Michigan, but it soon expanded into adjacent Allegan, Kent, and Muskegon counties, as well as south to Kalamazoo County.

Because persons from the same Old Country villages preferred to settle together in order to lessen the emotional shock of leaving the homeland and to facilitate the adjustment to a new environment, provincial or local loyalties remained strong, at least in the early settlements. In the classic example of this phenomenon, nearly every
village and town in half a dozen townships surrounding the central city of Holland boasted a Dutch place-name from the province or town where most of the first settlers originated (Figure 9). Here they spoke the local dialect, established their churches and schools, and perpetuated dress and food customs. The entire settlement was known as de Kolonie, but it required the passing of the first generation before the colony became a community. Dutch Reformed cultural features remain strong in this region to the present day and scholars have mapped them (see Figure 10).

In American cities and villages that pre-dated Dutch occupancy, the new immigrants likewise clustered in neighborhoods with family and friends. In Grand Rapids, the quintessential Dutch-American large city, 40 percent of the population was of Dutch birth or ancestry in 1900—the largest proportion of Dutch in any American city over 25,000 population. Here the Dutch isolated themselves not only from the west-side Poles but even from their fellow countrymen. In the period 1850-1900, twelve distinct neighborhoods have been identified, each composed mainly of immigrants from the same villages and regions in the Netherlands. Thus, “even though each Dutch neighborhood . . . could easily be characterized as a ‘little Holland’ . . . it would be more precise to identify each cluster as a ‘little Zeeland,’ ‘little Groningen,’ or ‘little Overijssel,’ thereby affirming the provinciality of the particular settlements.”50 Even later moves within the city were often dictated by these connections; only one fourth of the families that moved within the city left their own neighborhoods. The magnet at the center of each locality, of course, was a church where the people could worship in the old way in the Dutch language, and even be served in many instances by pastors called from their home villages in the Old Country.

The implications of this fragmentation and localism within immigrant groups such as the Dutch are only dimly perceived today. It affected political and economic as well as church life. Paul Kleppner, the noted ethnocultural political historian, discovered that in the nineteenth century Calvinist Dutch immigrants in western Michigan who were members of the Reformed church in America supported the Republican party more strongly than did

Figure 9
Area of Dutch Place Names in Kent, Allegan, and Ottawa Counties, Michigan

Figure 10
Dutch Reformed Cultural Features in Ottawa and Allegan Counties, 1961

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Christian Reformed adherents. In a full-scale furniture strike in Grand Rapids in 1911, the furniture workers, many Dutch and Polish, failed to outlast the manufacturers because they were fragmented by conflicting loyalties and thus were unable to organize themselves.

The Grand Rapids pattern of voluntary fragmentation along localistic lines occurred in many other places in the 1840s and 1850s. In Chicago, immigrants from the province of Zuid-Holland located their community in the Calumet district of south Chicago, calling their village Lage (Low) Prairie and later South Holland. Meanwhile, other immigrants from the province of Noord-Holland planted their settlement six miles north in Hooge (High) Prairie (later called Roseland), while yet another group from Groningen Province established themselves nine miles away and near to the center of Chicago in a neighborhood popularly known as the Groningsche Hoek (Groningen Quarter). In Cleveland, where the Cuyahoga River bisects the city, Zeelander settled in the east side and Gelderlanders on the west side. Sometimes, immigrants from only one Dutch province could be found in a given city. Milwaukee’s “Dutch Hill” was populated with Gelderlanders. In Wisconsin, Frisians founded the towns of Friesland in Columbia County and New Amsterdam in LaCrosse County. Zeelander dominated the cities of Sheboygan and Oostburg, Gelderlanders in Alto, Groningers in Gibbsville, and Catholic Noord Brabanter in Little Chute.

There was also a religious “fault line” among Dutch immigrants. Over one third of the Catholic immigrants went to the cities and larger towns along the established transportation routes to the Midwest: Cincinnati and St. Louis from the South, and Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Bay City, Chicago, Milwaukee, and

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32 Jeffrey D. Kleinman, “The Great Strike: Religion, Labor and Reform in Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1890-1916” (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University 1985). The Dutch also divided over political reform. When the city adopted a commission-city manager form of government in 1916, the first generation Dutch on the southwest side strongly opposed it, but the second generation Dutch on the southeast side supported it.
Green Bay from the East. These places were all Catholic centers with institutional infrastructures in place. As a result, Dutch Catholics readily worshipped and intermarried with Catholics of other nationalities, especially Germans, Belgians, and Irish. Only the cities of Cincinnati, Chicago, and Grand Rapids had parishes served by a Dutch-speaking priest in the mid to late nineteenth century. By contrast, the Dutch Calvinists maintained five hundred congregations and Dutch-language worship services were still common in the 1920s. Thus, the Dutch Catholics established only a few immigrant colonies, whereas the Calvinists, and especially the Secceders, formed enclaves wherever they settled. In short, religion helped assimilate Dutch Catholics but confirmed Dutch Calvinists in their Dutchness.

As this survey has shown, the Northwest immigrants, both foreign- and American-born, settled in clusters. The norm was homogeneous groups with traditional values and an ethnoreligious "glue" provided by their churches and schools. The more traditional the values, the more they sought to preserve the group. Fathers kept married children "close" by providing farms for sons or sons-in-law and by keeping the homestead "in the family." German, Dutch, and Scandinavian farm settlements, for example, always expanded geographically because fathers were willing to pay premium prices for nearby farms put on the market by native-born neighbors. As the adage said: "When the German comes in, the Yankee goes out." Similarly, fathers bequeathed their farms intact to one of their sons in exchange for parental care and support in retirement. Thus did Old Stock farmers cling to their cherished clans. But the historical forces were against them. The remorseless rectangularity of the Land Ordinance militated against communal living in the Old World style, in favor of individual farmsteads strung out along the section-line roads. The Northwest Ordinance and Constitution recognized persons and their rights but groups are invisible in American jurisprudence. Above all, the forces of urbanization and industrial growth, with their promises of higher living standards off the farm, proved irresistible.

35 Swierenga, "Religion and Immigration Patterns," 36-40.
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Migrants who settled in colonies were also pressured to intermingle and diffuse, especially by their American neighbors. As one early Illinois leader, George Flower, wrote in an 1830s tract, The Error of Emigrants: "The idea of forming exclusive settlements of Germans, English, or Irish is very erroneous and highly prejudicial to the interests of the settlers themselves." Flower thought immigrants needed to intermix in order to learn the best ways of living on the frontier; group settlement hindered rather than enhanced their chances of success. The editors of the Illinois Journal (Springfield) in 1849 expressed the prevailing wisdom: "When foreigners come to our country ... they should become Americanized as soon as possible and this can never be done if they are located in isolated communities."

Despite these admonitions, the European immigrants, like the New England Yankees and Pennsylvania Germans, preferred transplanting their "covenanted communities" centered around church, schoolhouse, and meeting house. Eventually individualism triumphed over communalism, but even today, after 150 years, many ethnoreligious communities proudly cling to their traditions. The Old Northwest, despite its monotonous topography, never was a featureless cultural plain. Rather it was an ethnic mosaic of amazing richness and diversity, created under the institutional umbrella of the "Trinity of Revolutionary Testaments" of 1785 and 1787. This is one of the bicentennial legacies we celebrate.

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I-4. Traditional Rural Culture Regions of the Eastern and Central United States.
This regionalization of the eastern half of the United States is concerned solely with rural populations and their cultural configurations. The date would seem to be the early twentieth century.