



Building castles in the air : Andreas Wormser, immigrant locator and land developer  
by Delbert Delos Van Den Berg

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History  
Montana State University

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Abstract:

Andrew Wormser was the father of Dutch communities in southwestern Montana, and his promotion of immigrant settlement in the West contributed to the establishment of Dutch communities throughout the Intermountain area. Transformed from an idealistic missionary into a immigrant locator and pioneer real estate developer, Andrew's colonization attempts were choreographed by his family's heritage, and complicated by a lifestyle that created illusions of grandeur. Andrew attempted to secure a place in America's upper class by creating a personal fortune from his development schemes in Montana, but he failed to achieve his goals when he disregarded the economic and environmental realities of the frontier. Andrew's failed development schemes, however, are turned into a success when his dream of empire is redefined as a lasting imprint on the human and physical landscape of the Intermountain West. My research of Andrew Wormser's life and entrepreneurial activities consisted of an analysis of archival material, government documents, primary and secondary sources, personal interviews, and on site visits to Wormser City and Big Timber, Montana, and Wenatchee, Washington. The Montana Historical Society Library; Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections at Montana State University, Bozeman; Hope College Archives and the Heritage Collection, Holland, MI; and Heritage Hall and Colonial Origins Collection of the Christian Reformed Church, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI, proved very valuable to my research. My study brought to light how Andrew's life and career was a microcosm of Dutch American history, and that he followed the leadership role of influential religious and civil leaders within the Dutch community of his day. The paper also challenges a Frontier Myth that insists that life in the West promotes progress, success and opportunity all leading to economic gain. Andrew Wormser's life, while sharing some of the accepted components of the Myth, actually suggests a variant of the Frontier Myth that promotes a stronger character, and accepts a spiritual wealth gained from survival within the framework of trial and error. Along with spiritual wealth, a key ingredient of a revised myth is the realization and acceptance of environmental limitations that make up the arid Intermountain West.

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## ABSTRACT

Andrew Wormser was the father of Dutch communities in southwestern Montana, and his promotion of immigrant settlement in the West contributed to the establishment of Dutch communities throughout the Intermountain area. Transformed from an idealistic missionary into a immigrant locator and pioneer real estate developer, Andrew's colonization attempts were choreographed by his family's heritage, and complicated by a lifestyle that created illusions of grandeur. Andrew attempted to secure a place in America's upper class by creating a personal fortune from his development schemes in Montana, but he failed to achieve his goals when he disregarded the economic and environmental realities of the frontier. Andrew's failed development schemes, however, are turned into a success when his dream of empire is redefined as a lasting imprint on the human and physical landscape of the Intermountain West. My research of Andrew Wormser's life and entrepreneurial activities consisted of an analysis of archival material, government documents, primary and secondary sources, personal interviews, and on site visits to Wormser City and Big Timber, Montana, and Wenatchee, Washington. The Montana Historical Society Library; Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections at Montana State University, Bozeman; Hope College Archives and the Heritage Collection, Holland, MI; and Heritage Hall and Colonial Origins Collection of the Christian Reformed Church, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI, proved very valuable to my research. My study brought to light how Andrew's life and career was a microcosm of Dutch American history, and that he followed the leadership role of influential religious and civil leaders within the Dutch community of his day. The paper also challenges a Frontier Myth that insists that life in the West promotes progress, success and opportunity all leading to economic gain. Andrew Wormser's life, while sharing some of the accepted components of the Myth, actually suggests a variant of the Frontier Myth that promotes a stronger character, and accepts a spiritual wealth gained from survival within the framework of trial and error. Along with spiritual wealth, a key ingredient of a revised myth is the realization and acceptance of environmental limitations that make up the arid Intermountain West.

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

No matter how fast the lie is, the truth  
will catch up with it.

-Dutch Proverb<sup>1</sup>

In 1893 Andrew Wormser, editor of The Light of the Valley a newspaper published in Bozeman, Montana, traveled to Holland to reinter his father's body in the family plot at Hellendorn.<sup>2</sup> While in Europe, Andrew sent a letter to the newspaper sharing his personal observations of the economic, political and social climate of the continent on the eve of the twentieth century. The letter also revealed another of

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<sup>1</sup> De Grondwet, 4 June 1897, "Al is de leugen nog zoo snel, De waarheid achterhaald haar wel," quoted from a report written to the De Grondwet by an unknown settler at Wormser City.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Wormser's name appears in a variety of written forms and may cause some confusion for researchers. Andreas, the name given to Andrew by his father at birth, was used frequently in the Wormser family tree creating a bit of nomenclature confusion. When children in the Netherlands were named after another family member, they were known as "son, or daughter" of their father eliminating confusion. In the case of Andrew, he was known as "Andreas, son of Hendrick." All immigrants upon immigration to the United States were required to list a surname, and Hendrick's son became known as Andreas Wormser. After immigration, Andrew often signed his name as- A. Wormser. The use of a single initial may have given Andrew a sense of identity from other Andreas, or as with the custom of other famous Dutchmen, it may have been used as a mark of social distinction. Dutch authors seldom referred to Andrew as Andreas, but often referred to him interchangeably as A. Wormser, Wormser, Dr. Wormser, or Rev. Wormser. Non-Dutch authors most often refer to him as Andrew Wormser. While living in Wenatchee, Andrew signed his name as "Andrew Wormser," indicating his acceptance of the Americanized version of his name. In the Wenatchee Cemetery records and plot book, he is referred to as Rev. Andrew Wormser. In this paper, Andreas will be referred to as Wormser, Rev. Wormser, or simply Andrew.

Andrew's reasons for his trip: he was on a mission to discover the attitudes of his former countrymen regarding immigration to the United States. Simply put, Andrew was trying to recruit Dutch settlers for Montana.

While traveling across the Dutch countryside, Andrew discovered the concerns that moved his former countrymen to leave their homeland. Andrew observed a population that had lost all respect for governmental authority and a state dominated church. He wrote about a country that was near revolt over leadership, and of a gap between the wealthy and the poor that had become a "chasm...which cannot be bridged."<sup>3</sup>

Along with the social unrest, Andrew also reported on religious dissatisfaction. He wrote that many of the rural Dutch blamed their current religious distress on "heretical doctrines" proclaimed from the pulpits of a state church and taught in the classrooms of the state run school system. Yet, even with all the religious unrest Andrew was careful to point out that Dutch society still demonstrated a delicate balance, "...I have visited many a province and many a town and village where the old-fashioned love and respect for religion exists as of yore."<sup>4</sup>

In his attempt to understand the immigrant farmer's mind, Andrew also analyzed the economic pressures bearing down on the Dutch. Traveling throughout Holland, Andrew discovered that the lingering results of famine, a shortage

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<sup>3</sup> The Light of the Valley, February 1893.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

of land, and unemployment prompted many to emigrate.

However, many, despite these hardships, were reluctant to immigrate because they did not know if conditions in America would, in fact, be better. They often waited to hear reports from friends and relatives who had ventured to pave the way.

Most important, and what later turned out to be prophetic of Andrew's own settlement activity, were his summary comments on why some Dutch preferred braver souls to immigrate first.

...And this is no wonder when we know that by promises which cannot be kept, and by doubtful inducements, people have sometimes been led to enthusiastically [to] follow leaders in large numbers, only to find themselves deceived in the end. That such an enterprise is usually short-lived is self-evident.<sup>5</sup>

Ironically, Andrew Wormser was one of the first major land developers of Montana's frontier. Arriving in Montana on the threshold of statehood in 1889, Andrew carved out an identity in the Intermountain West based on his auspicious family background and acquired frontier entrepreneurial skills.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Van Dersal's & Conner's Stockgrowers Directory of Marks and Brands for the State of Montana, 1872-1900, (Helena, MT: Van Dersal & Conner, 1900, reprint, Dawson County Bicentennial Committee, 1974), 334; "Andrew Wormser," Progressive Men of Montana, (Chicago: A.W. Bowen, 1902), 499-501; Jacob VanHinte, Netherlanders In America: A Study of Emigration and Settlement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in the United States, (Groningen, the Netherlands: P. Noordhoff, 1928, reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 694-695; Henry Stephen Lucas, Netherlanders in America: Dutch Immigration to the United States and Canada, 1789-1950, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1955, reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1989), 402-406; Rob Kroes, The Persistence of Ethnicity: Dutch Calvinist Pioneers in Amsterdam, Montana, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 45-47.

Southwestern Montana continues to show the contours of Andrew Wormser's imprint. In Gallatin County, Andrew's social and religious designs are reflected in the community fabric of Amsterdam and Churchill.<sup>7</sup> Physical reminders of Andrew's development schemes at Wormser City and the Holland Irrigation Company near Big Timber in Sweet Grass County, are etched on the landscape: a renovated barn, decaying foundations, shallow building depressions, traces of ditches, and an operating irrigation canal.

Andrew Wormser's life was an example of a type of entrepreneurial spirit of the 1890s: emigrant locator for the West Gallatin Irrigation Company, preacher, translator, newspaper editor, land speculator, irrigation developer, Dutch consul, and occasional confidant of politicians. Andrew's various skills, charisma, and opportunism not only advanced his entrepreneurial enterprises, but also encouraged fellow "Hollanders" to immigrate to the Intermountain area.<sup>8</sup> The descendants of those original Dutch immigrants continue to shape the texture of Montana's

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<sup>7</sup> Bozeman Courier, 3 December 1948- 4 February 1949; Great Falls Tribune, 2 September 1949; Rob Kroes, "Dutch Pioneers in the American West," Origin: Historical Magazine of Calvin College and Seminary Archives 7 (1988): 18-22; Menté Schuremans, "The Church and Assimilation in an Isolated National Group: A Study of the Role of the Christian Reformed Church in the Dutch Community near Manhattan, Montana" (M.A. thesis: Michigan State College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences, 1941): 4-8, 55-56.

<sup>8</sup> The term Hollanders was used to distinguish the immigrants and their descendants who came from the Netherlands from immigrants and their descendants who came from Germany. German immigrants were often called "Dutch," an Americanization of the German word "Deutsche," which when translated is "German." The Dutch community at times preferred the term Hollander for identification purposes, but the label has also gained some negative connotations from anti-immigrant groups who have used the term to slur the Dutch. So not to offend, nor create confusion in this paper, immigrant Hollanders and their descendants will be referred to as Dutch.

cultural and physical landscape one hundred years later.<sup>9</sup>

Joining other immigrant Americans during the late 1800s, Andrew Wormser came to explore, exploit, and enjoy the West. Like George A. Crofutt, eminent pioneer of Western tourism, Andrew authored a book in 1885 that chronicled his travels and his adventures in the American West.<sup>10</sup> Andrew wrote Verspreide Geschriften, Hier een Weinig, Daar een Weinig [Scattered Writings, Little Here, a Little There] to excite and impress a Dutch readership looking for adventure and opportunity.<sup>11</sup> Since few Dutch authors during the era chose to write about the American West, the book provides a unique ethnic perspective on the developing frontier. Andrew, like George A. Crofutt, became one of the linkmen who extended and accelerated the economic development and settlement of the region in the late 1800s.

Andrew Wormser was guilty, however, of peddling the very "doubtful inducements" that he foreshadowed in his 1893 letter to the The Light of the Valley. Absorbed in the romantic and transcendental images of the frontier, Wormser chose to ignore the environmental realities of an

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<sup>9</sup> Hans Keller, Four Days and One Hundred Years in Amsterdam, Montana, (the Netherlands: NOS Television, 1988), documentary video; Rob Kroes, "Windmills in Montana: Dutch Settlement in the Gallatin Valley," Montana Magazine of Western History 39 (Autumn 1989): 40-51; Bozeman Daily Chronicle, 29 March 1992; Lang Smith, "Ambiance in Amsterdam," Montana Magazine, (May-June 1993): 41-43.

<sup>10</sup> J. Valerie Fifer, American Progress, The Growth of the Transport, Tourist, and Information Industries in the Nineteenth-Century West, (Chester, CN: The Globe Pequot Press, 1988), 1-20.

<sup>11</sup> A. Wormser, Verspreide Geschriften, Hier een Weinig, Daar een Weinig, (Milwaukee: J.H. Yewdale & Zonen, 1885), 149-208.

unforgiving landscape. Within two decades of their conception, Andrew's grandiose dreams of development lay in abysmal failure.<sup>12</sup>

On Christmas eve 1914, Andrew Wormser died of heart failure in the home of a friend in Wenatchee, Washington. Within days, headlines throughout the Intermountain West pronounced a verdict on the Dutch entrepreneur: "Andrew Wormser, Friend of President Garfield, Dead," "Founder of Holland Colony in Gallatin Valley Dies a Pauper." By the middle of January, a nationally read Dutch weekly announced "Drs A. Wormser Overiden" [Dr. A. Wormser Dead].<sup>13</sup>

Andrew Wormser's death ended a career of western land development that began on the shores of Lake Michigan, reached across the prairies of Montana and the Palouse of Washington, and extended into the mountains of the Pacific Northwest. While embodying some aspects of the American "rags to riches story," Andrew's life was also bounded by the tragic limits of the American West.<sup>14</sup> A fitting epitaph to Andrew Wormser's life in the American West was inscribed

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<sup>12</sup> Van Hinte, Netherlanders in America, 697; Judith Basin County Paper, 5 October 1935; Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 406-407; Pioneer Society of Sweet Grass County, Pioneer Memories: Vol. 1, (Bozeman, MT: Bozeman Business Service, 1960), 283-84.

<sup>13</sup> Wenatchee Daily World, 26 December 1914; The Spokesman Review, 27 December 1914; Bozeman Weekly Courier, 30 December 1914; The Bozeman Chronicle, 30 December 1914; The Big Timber Pioneer, 31 December 1914; The Billings Gazette, 31 December 1914; De Volksvriend, 7 January 1915; De Grondwet, 7 January 1915.

<sup>14</sup> Robert G. Athearn, The Mythic West (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 64-104; Patricia Nelson Limerick, Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987), 79-133; Marc Reisner, Cadillac Desert (New York: Viking Penguin, 1986), 16-77; Donald Woster, Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity & the Growth of the American West, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 329-335.

in a letter from a transplanted prairie Dutchmen at Wormser City, Montana in 1898:

"Met het bouwen van luchtkastelen gaat men hier nog geregeld voort." [the building of air castles is regular business here.]<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> De Grondwet, 9 August 1898.

## CHAPTER 2

## THE NURTURING OF AN ENTREPRENEUR

All is bustle, motion, and struggle  
 ..confidence goes a long way towards  
 success...constant reaching forward to  
 and grasping the future...time seems too  
 short for what they have to do.

-James Bryce<sup>16</sup>

The Wormser family story was born in the medieval forests of north central Europe. Sometime in the seventeenth century, two distinct branches emerged, one located in Germany and the other in the Netherlands. Andrew Wormser was a descendant of the Dutch family Wormser who settled near Hellendorn, in the eastern part of the Netherlands. Andrew's earliest known descendant was Hans Ernst.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Fifer, American Progress, 6-7.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Wormser's family history is assembled from fragments discovered in books, newspapers, government documents, letters, and genealogic records collected by family members in the Netherlands and the U.S. All agree that the Wormser family genesis took place somewhere in the medieval forests of Germany. Genealogic researchers, however are split on the exact origin of Andrew's Dutch progeny, since current oral tradition has provided contradictory accounts. One narrative dating back to the 1600s, located a soldier from Talheim registered in an Heilbronner Hospital near Wittenburg as Hans Erst Wormser (ca. 1630-1693). After recuperating from wounds received in a battle near Nordlingen during the Thirty Years War, Hans settled in Heilbronn and became a baker/winegrower. Dissatisfied with the "liberal" theology of the Heilbronn Lutherans, Hans moved his family to the Netherlands near more "orthodox" Lutherans. The other account dates back to the 1700s to a family of Jews by the name of Wümsers. This family was involved in linen trade in Worms, Germany, but later fled to the Low Counties to escape medieval anti-Semitism in Germany.

The Dutch Wormsers are most famous for their activity in an orthodox religious revival in Holland, the Secession of 1834, that precipitated one of the largest migrations of Dutch to the United States. Andrew Wormser's life paralleled the religious careers of some of his family, but his adventures in the American West added a new dimension of color to an venturesome family, who, by the mid-1800s, were found on three continents.<sup>18</sup>

Andrew Wormser's entrepreneurial career in the Netherlands and the U.S. encompassed a great deal of variety: hemp manufacturer, missionary, political advisor, newspaper editor, railroad agent and locator, land and town developer, irrigator, mineral investor, and bookstore owner. His life was partially patterned after two close relatives, Johan Adam Wormser (known as J.A.), his uncle, and Hendrick Wormser, his father.

Johan Adam Wormser (1807-1862), was a member of a group of dissident orthodox Calvinist reformers who plunged the Netherlands into a civil conflict during the 1830s over a repressively run state church. J.A. and other religious revivalists, including Hendrick P. Scholte, Albertus C. Van Raalte, Cornelius Vander Muelen, and Sine Bolks, belonged to a group known as the Afgescheidenen [Seceders]. The Seceders took their name from a fracture within the Dutch Reformed

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<sup>18</sup> The Wormser family has been found in Germany and the Netherlands, Europe; the United States, North America; and South Africa, Africa. See Florence Wormser, letter to Don Wormser, 6 March 1986; C.J. (Caty) Roest-Wormser, letter to Catherine Wormser, 7 September 1992; Don Wormser, letter to author, 19 April 1993; Caty Wormser, letter to Don Wormser, 6 December 1996; Don Wormser, letter to author, 2 February 1994.

Church called the Afscheiding [Secession of 1834].<sup>19</sup>

The Secession of 1834 was actually an extension of a larger continental wave of pietism and political upheaval that swept Europe during the mid-nineteenth century. The government of the Netherlands, like other European nations following the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, sought to reestablish its control over its constituents. A key element in the government's design for greater internal dominance rested on the authority it had over the Dutch Reformed Church. By centralizing authority within the church, revising its doctrine, and changing its liturgy, the Dutch authorities attempted to control a spiritual life that was intertwined with the country's political life. In a gesture of authority over the nation's religious life, the government renamed the largest protestant church, the Gereformeerde Kerk [Reformed Church], the Hervormde Kerk ["Reorganized" Reformed Church] in 1816.

The government's interference in the religious practices of the church set the stage for a volatile response by Dutch Protestants who cherished the personalized religion that came as a result of the Reformation. The government's persecution of the Seceders not only solidified their position, but increased their numbers.<sup>20</sup> By opposing the government's

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<sup>19</sup> DeJong, The Dutch in America, 129-132; Mulder, Americans from Holland, 109-17; Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 42-53; Van Hinte, Netherlanders in America, 86-96; Henry Beets, The Christian Reformed Church in North America, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eastern Avenue Book Store, 1923), 19-24; John Kromminga, The Christian Reformed Church: A Study in Orthodoxy, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1949), 17-24.

<sup>20</sup> Mulder, Americans from Holland, 112-13.

measures, J.A. Wormser and the Seceders not only believed they were reacting against an tyrannical government that wished to institutionalize Holland's religion, but that they were reviving and extending the original spirit of Luther's Protestant Reformation.<sup>21</sup>

At first, the Seceders' ideas of church reform and schism did not appeal to the general public. The movement did receive an emotional boost during the mid-1830s when a nationwide economic depression was complicated by a cholera epidemic that caused the death of more than 22,000 people. Many discouraged people, especially in rural areas, turned to the conservative Calvinistic theology of the Seceders for answers.

As a response to increased membership, the Seceders

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<sup>21</sup> The Reformation in the Netherlands actually received more of its impetus from John Calvin, a French reformer based in Switzerland, than the neighboring German theologian Martin Luther. Theologians have also perceived Calvin as more of a reactionary than Luther, and his teachings have been considered more orthodox. Calvin's followers distinguished themselves by calling themselves "reformed," and their Churches became known as Reformed Churches. With the concern for orthodoxy paramount, the Reformed Church in the Netherlands became a "fractious church" with orthodox factions often breaking away from the parent church. The Secession of 1834 was the first major fracture within the Dutch Reformed Church after the Reformation. In 1836 and 1892, the church experienced subsequent fractures that resulted in two major divisions that still exist today in the Netherlands. When the Dutch Reformed Church was transplanted in North America in 1624, it did not leave its fractious ways in the "old country." In 1822, the True Protestant Reformed Church split off over the doctrine of Arminianism (the process of sanctification). In 1857, the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) broke with the Reformed Church over several doctrinal questions, lodge membership and an emphasis on Christian day schools. Many immigrants from the Netherlands who sympathized with the Secession of 1834 joined the CRC because it was viewed as more orthodox than the Reformed Church. In 1824 the Protestant Reformed Church broke with the CRC over the doctrine of Common Grace (who is saved). In 1991, a group called the Christian Reformed Alliance Churches severed its relationship with the CRC over Biblical inerrancy and the issue of women in ecclesiastical office. In 1995, yet another group of orthodox believers in the CRC threatened a break with the denomination if the CRC's position of women in ecclesiastical office was not changed. The full impact of the most recent fractures has not been fully realized, but recent speculation by members within the CRC indicate that the newest set of fractures will make the mapping of North America's Reformed Churches even more complex.

formally organized their church and called it the Christlijke Gereformeerde Kerk [Christian Reformed Church]. By adding the "Christian" to their church's title, the Seceders sought to demonstrate their affinity with an 1823 orthodox movement called "De Herstelde Kerk van Christus" [The Restored Church of Christ], and distinguish their new church from the state church.<sup>22</sup>

The government of the Netherlands, devastated by the Napoleonic wars and reeling from internal political-religious strife, responded to the Seceders' challenge with fines, civil restrictions, and imprisonment. Using a portion of its inherited civil law, the Napoleonic Code Articles 291-294, the government prohibited any gathering of twenty or more people "whose object is to meet daily or on special days appointed for the observance of religious, literary, political or other purposes."<sup>23</sup> However, official indifference to the "letter" of its civil law was evident when the crowds that gathered to disrupt the meetings of Seceders were not dispersed.

Closely related to its ban on public meetings, the government also enforced a part of its civil law that stated no one could "organize themselves without the consent of the government or otherwise than under the conditions which it may please the public authorities to impose upon the

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<sup>22</sup> Van Hinte, Netherlanders in America, 89.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 91; Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 50-51; Mulder, Americans from Holland, 110, 112; De Jong, The Dutch in America, 131.

society."<sup>24</sup> To insure compliance with its wishes, the government often quartered soldiers in the Seceders' homes.<sup>25</sup>

In 1845 a potato famine, coupled with general deterioration of soil conditions throughout the country, intensified the social and economic tensions of the Netherlands. Exasperated by national economic turmoil and tiring of religious persecution, whole communities of Seceders and their pastors, with the help of J.A. Wormser and led by Rev. H.P. Scholte and Rev. A.C. Van Raalte, migrated to the New World to preserve and propagate a more orthodox scriptural heritage.<sup>26</sup>

Immigrants associated with the Seceders were initially attracted to areas around Grand Rapids, Michigan; Pella, Iowa; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. These cities had experienced an earlier influx of Dutch immigrants not directly associated with the Secession of 1834, and had an abundance of land nearby for economic development. Along with these Midwestern localities, other subsequent religious settlements and towns established by the Seceders became cultural preserves that invited additional Dutch immigration. Consequently, the Midwest provided an "economic pool" of immigrants and naturalized Dutch-Americans for future Dutch land developers.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Mulder, Americans from Holland, 109.

<sup>25</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 53.

<sup>26</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 68; Van Hinte, Netherlanders in America, 91-107, 122; Mulder, America from Holland, 135.

<sup>27</sup> De Jong, The Dutch in America, 148.

Johan Adam Wormser did not choose to migrate with the Seceders, but remained in the Netherlands to effect internal change within the state church. In an effort to preserve and continue the spirit of the Secession of 1834, J.A. wrote biographies of Rev. Scholte and Van Raalte, and helped establish the Free University of Amsterdam in 1850.<sup>28</sup> Aided by the government's adoption of a more liberal constitution, the abdication of the nation's king, and the government's preoccupation with the Belgium Rebellion of 1850, the Seceders who remained in Holland gradually got the upper hand in the civil conflict. When the government acquiesced to their wishes, many of the Seceders' churches either entered into a closer ecclesiastical relationship, or reunited with the state church.<sup>29</sup>

Hendrick Wormser (1810-1887), Andrew's father and J.A.'s brother, worked as a bookkeeper for the Dutch East and West Indies Company. While financially successful, Hendrick never achieved the social status of his brother. In 1836, Hendrick joined J. A. Wormser and the Seceders in their religious reform movement as a lay pastor in the Christian Reformed Church. Hendrick was known for his fiery sermons characterized by orthodox rhetoric, and as an ardent support of Christian education.<sup>30</sup>

Even though Hendrick believed throughout his lifetime that he lived in the shadow of his brother, he took advantage

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<sup>28</sup> C.J. (Caty) Roest-Wormser, letter to Catherine Wormser, 7 September 1992.

<sup>29</sup> Van Hinte, Netherlanders in America, 85; De Jong, The Dutch in America, 131-32.

<sup>30</sup> C.J. (Caty) Roest-Wormser, letter to Don Wormser, 30 March 1993.

of his association with famous businessmen, politicians, writers and poets.<sup>31</sup> In 1870, Hendrick secured the affection of his community when he led a successful movement to end child labor in the spinning mills of Hellendorn.<sup>32</sup>

Hendrick is memorialized in Hellendorn today by community folklore and a school named after him.<sup>33</sup>

Hendrick Wormser was married twice; first to Magdalena Arends who bore him nine children. After Magdalena's death in 1854, Hendrick married her younger sister Maria who bore four more children. In 1887, Hendrick died and was entombed in Amsterdam. Andrew Wormser returned to the Netherlands in 1893 and helped reinter his father in the family plot in Hellendorn.<sup>34</sup>

Andrew Wormser and the Wormser family combined religious fervor and economic acumen. Religion and the pursuit of wealth were wholly compatible in a Dutch Reformed "world and life view" that merged all spheres of life under God.<sup>35</sup> The heritage of seeking wealth and piety passed on by J.A. and Hendrick Wormser to Andrew was not perceived as contradictory, but rather viewed as complementary. Andrew

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<sup>31</sup> "Andrew Wormser," Progressive Men of Montana, 499.

<sup>32</sup> C.J. (Caty) Roest-Wormser, letter to Don Wormser, 30 March 1993.

<sup>33</sup> One story has a jolly Hendrick dashing through the streets of Hellendorn late into the evening giving children rides in the rumble seat of his car, then stopping at his house where his wife would treat them all to strawberries and cream. See C.J. (Caty) Roest-Wormser letter to Don Wormser, 30 March 1993.

<sup>34</sup> The Light of the Valley, February 1893; C.J. (Caty) Roest-Wormser, letter to Don Wormser, 30 March 1993.

<sup>35</sup> The Belgic Confession, (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Reformed Publications, 1988), 16-17; The Heidelberg Catechism, (Grand Rapids, MI: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1975), 11.

Wormser, throughout his life, embraced entrepreneurship and religion as observed in the lives of his uncle and father.

Born September 25, 1846, Andrew was Hendrick and Magdalena Wormser's third son. In keeping with a practice of sending only the oldest son to private school, Andrew was sent to a public school, but Hendrick supplemented his education with a private tutor. In 1858, Andrew graduated at the head of his class at the age of twelve, and went to work at a large jute company.<sup>36</sup>

The events of the next part of Andrew's life are sketchy. Later in life, Andrew told a biographer that he felt a call to the ministry after he finished his schooling. Perhaps an adventurous spirit and a strong family heritage in religious activity contributed to Andrew's desire to change his occupation, expand his horizons, and immigrate to America.

In 1870, Andrew Wormser and a younger sister, Maria, immigrated to the United States.<sup>37</sup> Andrew and his sister were the first of their immediate family to immigrate, followed by five brothers and three sisters. Distant relatives of Andrew and Maria predated their arrival, but whether Andrew and Maria were met by these relatives is not known. Nevertheless with the help of earlier Dutch immigrants and their

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<sup>36</sup> "Andrew Wormser," Progressive Men of Montana, 499.

<sup>37</sup> Robert P. Swierenga, comp. Dutch Immigrants in U.S. Ship Passenger Manifests, 1820-1880: An Alphabetical Listing by Household Heads and Independent Persons, vol 2, (Wilmington, DE: SR Scholarly Resource Inc., 1968), 1179; idem, comp. Dutch Emigrants to the United States, South America, South Africa, and South East Asia 1835-1880: Alphabetical listing by Household Heads and Independent Persons, (Wilmington, DE: SR Scholarly Resources Inc., 1982), 342; C.J. (Coty) Roest-Wormser, letter to Catherine Wormser, 7 September 1992.

descendants, Andrew and Maria would not have been total strangers in America.<sup>38</sup> Andrew and Maria's migration actually preceded the peak years of Dutch immigration. Between 1880 and 1890, Dutch immigrants poured into America, and by 1900, 1.9 million Americans were registered as having Dutch ancestry.<sup>39</sup>

Immigration required Andrew to give up some comforts of his previous life, but he still benefited from his father's influence.<sup>40</sup> Hendrick Wormser was a friend of Dr. Van Raalte, the Secessionist leader of the largest and most well established Dutch colony in the Midwest. As a result of his father's influence, Andrew was accepted at Dr. Van Raalte's Hope College, in Holland, Michigan in 1871. After two years

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<sup>38</sup> With the exception of three brothers, little is known of Andrew and Maria's eight siblings who immigrated to the United States. William Wormser, Hendrick and Magdalena's youngest son, immigrated in 1874 and followed Andrew into the ministry, graduating from Central College in Pella, IA, and New Brunswick Seminary, NJ. William pastored at Bethel near Pella, IA; Passaic, NJ; and Jamestown, MI. William however was deposed from the ministry in 1889, and died of a heart attack in 1922 at Pella, IA. Henry Wormser, Hendrick and Magdalena's oldest son, immigrated in 1882, and settled at Orange City, IA. Henry traveled with Andrew through out the West in the late 1800s, and joined Andrew in the Gallatin Valley, purchasing a quarter section of land southeast of Bozeman. Henry died of a heart attack in 1894 at Bozeman, and was survived by his wife Christine. Christine died in the early 1900s, was buried in the Rouse plot at the Bozeman Cemetery, by E.A. Rouse. Edward Wormser, Hendrick and Maria's son, immigrated in 1882, and moved about the Midwest eventually settling in California where he became a well known horticulturist. Edward died in 1940, and was buried in Chicago.

<sup>39</sup> The first Dutch immigrants came to North America in 1615, but the Dutch never contracted "America fever" like other national groups. Nevertheless, by 1970 the Dutch ranked seventeenth in the immigrant groups who came to the United States. See Linda Pegman Dozema, Dutch Americans. A Guide to Information Sources, Ethnic Studies Information Guide Series, vol. 3, (Detroit:Gale Research Co., 1979), xi.

<sup>40</sup> The National Archives in the Netherlands and U.S. ship manifests from 1870 provide some tantalizing but very brief clues about Andrew Wormser's immigration. Andrew was listed three times between the years of 1870 and 1876, traveling back and forth between the U.S. and the Netherlands. Andrew was listed in 1870 as an emigrant "without occupation," but belonging to the "well to do class," and "economically important." U.S ship manifests list Andrew in 1873 as a manufacturing agent traveling in steerage, the cheapest and lowest class available. Andrew traveled in 1876 with his new wife in First Class.

of study, Andrew graduated with an A.B. degree and enrolled in Van Raalte's school for ministers, Western Theological Seminary. In 1875 Andrew, at the age of twenty-nine, received his M.A. in theology and was ordained into the ministry of the Reformed Church in America.<sup>41</sup>

Rev. Andrew Wormser received five calls from different churches throughout the Midwest after his graduation from seminary. Interest in Andrew was in part a result of his skill as a orator, but the Wormser family name had resonance among the recent immigrants who attended these churches. Andrew, however, showed a degree of adventure and independence by choosing a mission field on the Iowa frontier.<sup>42</sup>

On May 9, 1876, a year after Andrew Wormser went to the Iowa frontier, he married Anna Hoedemaker of Kalamazoo, Michigan. Little is known of their romance and subsequent marriage. Anna's father, John A. Hoedemaker of Holland, Michigan, was a diamond dealer associated with New York businesses. Her brother, Dr. Philip Hoedemaker was involved with J. A. Wormser in the development of the Free University of Amsterdam. With a source of capital and contact with

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<sup>41</sup> Charles Edward Corwin, A Manual of the Reformed Church in America 1628-1922, 5th ed., (New York: Board of Publications and Bible School Work of the Reformed Church in America, 1922), 599; Peter N. Van Den Berge, Historical Directory of the Reformed Church in America, 1628-1978: Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, no. 6, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 208.

<sup>42</sup> When Andrew Wormser arrived in Iowa in 1876, the state's frontier was no longer a line progressing across the state from east to west. In eastern and central Iowa, the frontier existed in "pockets" of land passed over by speculators who desired more choice locations for farmers and town builders. However, the Civil War and threat of conflict with the Sioux Indians slowed land speculation and preserved the prairie frontier of western Iowa, particularly the northwest corner, until the late 1870s. See Robert Swierenga, Pioneer and Profits, 6-24, 80-98, 127-157.

influential people, the young couple began a life without financial stress. In September of 1875, Andrew and Anna toured Europe on their honeymoon. Upon their arrival in Holland, Andrew was offered a pastorate at a leading English Presbyterian Church.<sup>43</sup>

Within the story of Andrew Wormser lies the hidden stories of his wife and children. Andrew's wife, Anna Hoedemaker, was born in 1803 in Michigan. Very little has been written about Anna, but what exists indicates she was resourceful and intelligent person. As her husband branched out in his religious and entrepreneurial activities, Anna became interested in community outreach, working with orphanages and underprivileged people. Later in life, Andrew told his biographer that Anna was his "coadjutor," implying that she was more than a companion. Anna's economic importance to the marriage was sharply highlighted in 1895 when she became a full partner with Andrew in his land development scheme near Big Timber, Montana.<sup>44</sup>

Andrew and Anna had two children, Alice and Peter, both of whom preceded them in death. Very little is know about Alice, Andrew and Anna's only natural child. In 1895, Alice married C. Howard Grube, a Presbyterian minister from Philipsburg, Montana. With her father officiating, Alice's wedding was an elaborate social affair that took place December 4, in Andrew and Anna's Bozeman home located on

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<sup>43</sup> "Andrew Wormser," Progressive Men of Montana, 499.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 500.

Mendenhall.<sup>45</sup>

Andrew and Anna's adopted son Peter, was born in 1873 as as Peter Berglund. Peter followed in his Andrew's footsteps, showing an equally strong entrepreneurial spirit. Starting in 1892 as a member of Wormser and Company, Peter sold typewriters in Bozeman. After joining his father in the newspaper business as assistant editor of the Light of the Valley, Peter expanded Wormser and Company's inventory to include bicycles and organs in 1893. In 1894, with Peter listed as the contact person, Wormser and Company sold insurance, tickets for the Netherlands Steam Company, and made bill collections all over the state.<sup>46</sup>

Peter moved to Sweet Grass County in 1895 and set up a business in Wormser City as a Notary Public, specializing in bill collecting.<sup>47</sup> Peter entered Sweet Grass County politics in 1898 as a Silver Republican, but only received one vote from Wormser City.<sup>48</sup> Three years later, while living with his parents, Peter purchased a quarter section of land next to Wormser City.<sup>49</sup>

After Andrew and Anna left Wormser City, Peter resumed using his birth name Berglund.<sup>50</sup> In 1906, Peter became a

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<sup>45</sup> Avant Courier, 30 November 1895; idem, 7 December 1895.

<sup>46</sup> Light of the Valley, April 1893; idem, May 1894; idem, November 1894; idem, December 1894.

<sup>47</sup> Big Timber Pioneer, 27 January 1898.

<sup>48</sup> Idem, 17 November 1898.

<sup>49</sup> Index of Deeds and Grantees No. 1, Sweet Grass County, Book 23, page 10.

<sup>50</sup> It is unknown why Peter started using his birth name, but after he resumed using his birth name there was some confusion over Peter's identity. In an article from the Big Timber Pioneer (date unknown), Peter has reported as Andrew's coachman.

junior partner in a Bozeman business firm called Benepe-Berglund Grain Company. Rising to vice-president and general manager of the firm, Peter took over the operation of the company's flour mill in Manhattan. He also invested heavily in ranch land throughout the Gallatin Valley with Sam McKennan and George M. Lewis, owners of the Manhattan Malting Company. Known as an astute business man, Peter was active in several business and social organizations in Bozeman and Manhattan. During this time, he also maintained close ties with individuals in the Dutch settlement south of Manhattan.<sup>51</sup>

In the fall of 1912, the financial records of the Benepe-Berglund Grain Company showed a discrepancy of nearly \$60,000. Once notified of the problem by the company's senior partner Frank Benepe, the Sheriff of Gallatin County began a quiet investigation of the firm's employees, of the Manhattan State Bank of Manhattan, and of Peter's land investments; however, no arrest warrants were served.<sup>52</sup>

On Thursday, September 26, Peter Berglund was seen boarding a westbound train at Logan, Montana. Later that same day, Peter checked in to the Dorothy Hotel in Butte. Peter stayed at the hotel throughout the day reportedly meeting with different individuals from Manhattan. Later that night, Peter was found in his room with a fatal gunshot wound, the gun and a spent cartridge near his body. After searching his body for identification, officers found only

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<sup>51</sup> Butte Miner, 28 September 1912.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

forty cents in his pockets, a torn up note, and a scrap of paper that said, "Peter Berglund, Notify Malcolm McLeod, Manhattan."<sup>53</sup>

Details that followed the discovery of Peter's body demonstrated a great deal of official confusion over his death. One report indicated that he was shot in the head, later the coroner reported he was shot in the heart. While some accounts placed members of Manhattan State Bank and Benepe-Berglund in Butte, others could not substantiate that anyone had visited Peter. The absence of powder marks on Peter's body pointed to foul play, but the death certificate signed by the Silver Bow Coroner indicated Peter committed suicide.<sup>54</sup>

Peter's funeral and internment in Bozeman was an elaborate affair attended by his wife and child, friends from the Dutch settlement south of Manhattan, and prominent businessmen of Manhattan and Bozeman. Andrew, who was living in Wenatchee at the time, did not attend the funeral.<sup>55</sup> Shrouded in a veil of mystery, Peter's death foreshadowed the death of his father two years later.

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<sup>53</sup> Bozeman Chronicle, 28 September 1912; Butte Miner, 29 September 1912.

<sup>54</sup> Butte Miner, 28 September 1912; State Of Montana Bureau of Vital Statistics, File 6323, No. 731.

<sup>55</sup> Bozeman Chronicle, 1 October 1912; Butte Miner, 29 September 1912.

## CHAPTER 3

## THE MINISTRY YEARS

The lure of the West did not affect all easterners in the same way. Perhaps many desired to take advantage of frontier opportunity, but few were able to do so; every individual's migration depended on three components: proximity, skill in pioneering techniques, and capital.

-Ray Allen Billington<sup>56</sup>

The first evidence of Andrew Wormser's entrepreneurial activity was recorded in 1875 in a letter to his friend Rev. C. Vander Veen of Canon City, Michigan.<sup>57</sup> Andrew wanted to purchase a book and did not have sufficient funds. Andrew wrote to Vander Veen that he took the "liberty" of charging the book to his friend's account and described in detail his plan for repayment with interest. Since his father in the Netherlands was also supplying money to cover his debt, Andrew explained the exchange rate and how that would affect the repayment. The letter provides an example of how Andrew manipulated money and people, and showed that even early on, he was not afraid to extract funds from other sources for his own gain.

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<sup>56</sup> David Dary, Entrepreneurs of the Old West, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 89.

<sup>57</sup> Andrew Wormser, letter to Rev. C. VanderVeen, 12 February 1875.

Perhaps as reassurance that he would be good for the money, Andrew also took the opportunity to tell his friend about his job offers,

A few months yet and I shall be through my course, ready to commence work and retake my place in this active world. I received two calls from Bethel, Iowa and an informal one from Drenthe; In Jamestown I am on the "Dribal"[Trio] and from Kendal I received the offer from Presbyterian, Eng. Church.<sup>58</sup>

While traveling in Europe after graduation, Andrew received yet another call, or invitation to serve a large Presbyterian Church in Amsterdam that conducted its worship services in English.<sup>59</sup> Andrew was in demand as a preacher, or what the Dutch immigrants called a "dominee," on both sides of the ocean.<sup>60</sup>

Andrew's decision regarding what invitation to accept must have been difficult for the young seminarian. His closest ties were with Van Raalte's Arnhem Settlement Association in Holland, Michigan, as evidenced by his choice of Hope College. However, Vander Meulen's Zeeland Association, located further to the east in Drenthe and

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> "Andrew Wormser," Progressive Men of Montana, 499.

<sup>60</sup> The practice of Protestant Dutch calling their clergy "dominee" stems from the post-Reformation Church's tie to the pre-Reformation Catholic Church where the clergy were held in high esteem. The title is one of respect given to an individual who has a large amount of influence on the spiritual and day-to-day life of their constituents. The Dutch equivalent to the word minister, "domkerk," also reflects a pre-Reformation heritage, but is a title of lesser respect. A more widely used word associated with Protestant clergy is the Dutch equivalent to the word preacher, "predikant," but this word is more often associated with the function of the clergy, whereas the word "dominee" describes the relationship of clergy to constituent.

Jamestown also extended invitations to Andrew to minister in their churches. Even Scholte's Utrecht Association in Iowa showed interest by sending two invitations to Andrew to come to Bethel, Iowa near Pella. The invitations to serve different immigrant churches indicate that Andrew was well received right from the beginning of his career by the three most important groups of recent Dutch immigrants.

Andrew's most interesting call was to Kendal, Michigan. The invitation to serve an Americanized Presbyterian congregation demonstrated that he had crossed a "cultural bridge" that many immigrants were slow in traversing. Andrew not only conversed freely with two cultural worlds, but was accepted by both.

Andrew's choice of the Iowa frontier in 1875 over settled Michigan, or urban Amsterdam, would have confused many of his contemporaries. The choice he made, however, demonstrated his sense of adventure along with an interest in the challenge and potential of the frontier.

When Rev. Wormser arrived in Iowa in 1875, it was in the final stages of an unparalleled land boom. For two decades after the federal government opened up a 50 mile strip along Mississippi River, land speculators and settlers rushed into the territory that classified 75 percent of its soil as Grade 1. Over the next three decades, Iowa experienced unprecedented growth partly because of its land speculation and the availability of federal land grants, and partly because its land was used as an award for Civil War veterans.

During the middle of this boom in 1846, the first Dutch immigrants arrived in Pella led by Rev. Hendrick P. Scholte.<sup>61</sup>

Joining Iowa's Dutch immigrants nearly two decades after their arrival, Rev. Wormser witnessed the legacy of Rev. Scholte. Rev. Scholte was not only the spiritual and economic leader of the nation's most wealthy Dutch immigrant settlements, but he was recognized as one of Iowa's largest land speculators.<sup>62</sup> During his stay in Iowa, Andrew was also able to observe first hand the unparalleled activity of Henry Hoppers, one of Iowa's most successful immigrant locators, and an excellent example of a frontier entrepreneur.<sup>63</sup>

Reverend Hendrick [Henry] P. Scholte had led a large group of Dutch immigrants to Iowa in 1846, and settled in what was called Cession 262 in central Iowa. Unlike their counterparts in Michigan, the Dutch who came to Iowa were from a wealthier class, and they arrived in United States with money to invest. The original settlement along the Des Moines River consisted of 18,000 acres, and Rev. Scholte held title to 12,540 acres. State records show Rev. Scholte's real estate in 1850 was valued at \$2,096; by 1860 the value of his properties had increased to \$40,000.<sup>64</sup>

Rev. Scholte, a minister and university professor in the Netherlands, held a prominate position in the Dutch immigrant

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<sup>61</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 151-95; Van Hinte, Netherlanders in America, 141-43; Mulder, Americans from Holland, 149-54; DeJong, The Dutch in America, 139-42.

<sup>62</sup> Robert P. Swierenga, Pioneers and Profit: Land Speculation on the Iowa Frontier, (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1968), 240.

<sup>63</sup> Van Hinte, Netherlanders in America, 493-97, 501-03, 588-89.

<sup>64</sup> Swierenga, Pioneers and Profit, 103.

community as one of the original organizers of the Secession of 1834. However, unlike Dr. Van Raalte of Michigan, who wanted to "transplant a Dutch church that would adhere strongly to the religious traditions and patterns of the Netherlands," Scholte took an approach that encouraged the immigrants to integrate into the American society. While opposed to the theocratic society created by Dr. Van Raalte, Rev. Scholte did not relinquish his position of power and influence in the Iowa Dutch community. Scholte's domination was carried out through his activities as minister, farmer, land agent, notary, attorney, banker, broker, dealer of farm implements, publisher, school board member, postmaster, owner of key businesses (sawmill, stone quarry and lime kiln), and leader in Iowa and national politics.<sup>65</sup>

Rev. Scholte's wealth was displayed in the beautiful home he erected in the middle of Pella. The house, a large two-story building that became a show place of the community, was surrounded by a nine acre formal English garden that became renown throughout eastern Iowa.<sup>66</sup> The house was financed by marketing Scholte's lots in Pella that initially sold for \$50, but by 1855 were selling for anywhere between \$200 and \$500.<sup>67</sup>

Rev. Scholte had created a solid Dutch community in Iowa, but when Andrew Wormser arrived in Iowa seven years after the Dutch leader's death, Pella was undergoing

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<sup>65</sup> Van Hinte, Netherlanders in America, 493-97.

<sup>66</sup> Mulder, Americans from Holland, 154; Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 189-90.

<sup>67</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 191.

transition. The change was in part caused by the lack of available land near Pella, but more so by the land development efforts of Henry Hospers.

Henry Hospers was a contemporary of Andrew Wormser. Born in 1830, Hospers came to Pella in 1847 with Rev. Scholte and, as a teacher, became one of the settlement's leaders. Shortly after his arrival, Hospers changed occupations and spent the next seven years moving across the Iowa landscape as a chain puller and a surveyor.<sup>68</sup> In 1851, he set up a real estate office, became an attorney, and started publishing a newspaper to promote settlement.

In 1867, Hospers symbolically accepted Scholte's mantle of leadership by becoming mayor of Pella. The selection of Hospers as a community leader, signaled a change in the attitudes of the Dutch immigrants. No longer did they see it necessary to have a religious leader as a civic leader. Hoser's emerging leadership was also recognized outside the Dutch community during his tenure as mayor. Officials in Iowa's government asked Hospers to serve on the state's Board of Immigration, resulting in several trips to the Netherlands to promote Dutch settlement.<sup>69</sup>

Henry Hospers had become interested in bringing Dutch immigrants to Iowa after an earlier stay in St. Joseph,

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<sup>68</sup> Frontier surveyors used a measuring instrument called "Gunter's chain" to measure land for settlement. The cumbersome chain was 66 feet long, with 100 links. Today chain has been replaced with a lighter, more compact tape, but the term "chain" is still used. Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 338; Van Hinte, Netherlanders in America, 494.

<sup>69</sup> Van Hinte, Netherlanders in America, 588-89; Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 474-75.

Missouri. During this visit to St. Joseph, Hospers observed the preparations of westward bound immigrants and contracted "land fever." Traveling to the Netherlands for the State of Iowa only intensified Hospers' desire to bring immigrants to the frontier. In 1871, Hospers resigned his position as mayor and devoted the rest of his life to immigrant locating.<sup>70</sup>

With cheap land becoming hard to find around Pella, Hospers decided to locate immigrants in northwest Iowa. In 1851, the Sioux Indians were forced to cede this corner of the state, and it was opened up for settlement. Most settlers, however, avoided this vacant corner of the state called Sioux County because it was too close to New Ulm, Minnesota, where the Sioux Indians had led a bloody uprising in 1862. Northwest Iowa wasn't the first choice of the Dutch settlers either, but since a land speculator had bought up the lands they originally desired, they set out for Sioux County.<sup>71</sup>

Using his skills as a surveyor, and actually pulling the survey chains himself, Henry Hospers led an advance group of settlers into northwest Iowa. Since the landscape of northwest Iowa's prairie had few landmarks, Hospers had the immigrants construct pyramids of dirt. The pyramids would be

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<sup>70</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 333.

<sup>71</sup> Originally the Dutch settlers intended to purchase land in Cherokee County, 20 miles southeast of Sioux County, but changed their minds when the price of land went up. When Hospers and the other Dutch immigrant leaders arrived in Sioux City to make application at the land office for a tract in Sioux County, they met a crowd of speculators who had heard of possible immigrant interest in settlement of northwest Iowa. The scene became chaotic when many of the speculators, who were eager to claim land and profit from Dutch settlement, started shoving and fighting each other over who was going to be first in line before Hospers. Van Hinte, Netherlanders in America, 473; Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 337.

used as markers to allow the pioneers to retrace their steps back to Sioux City, Iowa, where they had to register their land claims. The Dutch immigrants, under the leadership of Hospers in 1870, took possession of thirty eight sections, or 24,340 acres of land. Fifteen years later, the settlement Hospers had helped to establish in northwest Iowa, had grown become the largest and most important Dutch settlement outside of the state of Michigan.<sup>72</sup>

Henry Hospers left the Dutch settlers for a short time to continue his work in Pella, but returned to help them establish Orange City, Iowa, the principal town of the settlement. Hospers, who had received one-third of the town's lots as payment for his settlement efforts, remained in Orange City to continue his entrepreneurial career as a newspaperman, attorney, banker, storekeeper, insurance agent, notary, county supervisor, and state legislator.<sup>73</sup>

Commemorating the leadership of Hospers, grateful Dutch settlers named a town after him on the very edge of their northwest Iowa settlement.

The legacy of Rev. Scholte, and the person of Henry Hospers, introduced Andrew Wormser to two important frontier types: the land speculator and locator. At times the types merged, but more often an individual would be either a land speculator or locator.

While the job definitions of the land speculator and

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<sup>72</sup> DeJong, The Dutch in America, 152.

<sup>73</sup> VanHinte, Netherlanders in America, 428.

locator were often blurred, the method of remuneration usually defined the type. The locator was generally a local resident paid by the immigrants he helped to settle. Remaining in the vicinity of his clients, the locator maintained a close relationship with his clients and with the land they lived on because he depended on them for money.<sup>74</sup> The land speculator, however, was in the business of selling land for a profit. Once the land was sold, the speculator moved on in search of new land to buy and sell, leaving his clients to fend for themselves.<sup>75</sup>

The frontier locator was a familiar figure in the American West. The term locator was borrowed from the German word, *lokator*.<sup>76</sup> A "lokator" was a medieval entrepreneur who was in charge of founding a city for a landowner, or a knight in charge of the distribution of land to tenants on the behalf of a landowner. In the American West, the locator was an experienced local man, who understood the bewildering process of land acquisition and settlement.

Most often the locator, or agent, did not own land and was employed by land speculators to find individuals to purchase and settle land. For newcomers, the locator would find land, assess the potential and value, arrange for financing, help in the procurement of farm equipment, and

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<sup>74</sup> Daniel N. Vichorek, Montana's Homestead Era, Montana Geographic Series, no. 15 (Helena, MT: American Geographic Publishing, 1987), 28-29; William E. Farr, "Sollid wants to see you: George Sollid, Homestead Locator," Montana Magazine of Western History, 20 (Spring 1979): 16-27.

<sup>75</sup> Swierenga, Pioneers and Profits, 5-6; Limerick, Legacy of Conquest, 67-70.

<sup>76</sup> VanHinte, Netherlanders in America, 494.

provide transportation of the newcomer's household goods and family.

First acquainted with the roles in Iowa, Andrew Wormser would eventually work as both locator to land speculator. As locator, he helped settlers find available land, establish a residence, and navigate the maze of governmental regulations, while providing a cultural bridge for the unfamiliar Dutch immigrant. As speculator, he acquired a large tract of land, secured water rights, utilized government programs for his own advancement, and at times took advantage of unfamiliar settlers who assumed he was knowledgeable and forthright. However, before Andrew Wormser began his locating and land speculation activities, he answered a call to an urban ministry that introduced him to Dutch immigrants who longed for a frontier life.

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After three years at Bethel, Iowa, Rev. Wormser left his successful pastorate in 1878 for the First Reformed Church of Cleveland, Ohio. Despite his enjoyment of the frontier, Andrew could no longer resist the lure of the big city, and he warmly described his life in Cleveland in Verspreide Geschriften: Hier een weinig, Daar een weinig.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Wormser, Verspreide Geschriften, 134-137.

Directly in line with the westward migration of Dutch immigrants, Ohio was well suited for Rev. Wormser's career. His tenure in Cleveland allowed him to stay in touch with the Dutch immigrants and learn firsthand about their needs and desires. While in Cleveland, he established two mission chapels in the city's growing suburbs. As Rev. Wormser's ministerial career prospered, he also expanded his circle of friends among the city's elite, including politician and soon to be president, James A. Garfield.<sup>78</sup>

In 1882, Rev. Wormser answered a call to Cedar Grove, Wisconsin and served the First Reformed Church of that community. While Cedar Grove was fast becoming an urban center on the shore of Lake Michigan, the move to Wisconsin represented for Andrew a return to the West. By living in Cedar Grove, Andrew came in contact with people who freely traveled back and forth between the frontier and established population centers.

The move to Wisconsin also marked the "high water" point of his ministerial career. Recognized as a dynamic speaker, his popularity and demand as a preacher was at a peak. Andrew received twenty-two calls from different churches

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<sup>78</sup> In 1878 when Andrew Wormser arrived in Cleveland, James A. Garfield was a rising star in Republican politics. In a chapter in Verspreide Geschriften entitled, "Een bezoek bij Generaal Garfield, Kandidaat voor het Presidentschap der Vereenigde Staten" [A visit with General Garfield, candidate for the Presidency of the United States], Andrew described his relationship with Garfield in the pre-White House years. After Garfield was elected to the Presidency, the Wormser family were guests of the Garfield's at the White House in summer of 1880. Two days after the Wormser's left the White House, Garfield was assassinated as he was leaving Washington for a school reunion in Ohio. Wormser described Garfield's funeral also in his book in a chapter entitled, "De bergrafenis van President Garfield" [Over the grave of President Garfield]. Wormser, Verspreide Geschriften, 139-49.

ranging from Milwaukee to Chicago and New York City. The Wisconsin pastorate placed Rev. Wormser in the oldest, and third largest settlement of Dutch immigrants in the Midwest.

In 1845, Wisconsin had received the first influx of Dutch immigrants after the Secession of 1834. Dr. Van Raalte and Rev. Scholte had shown some interest in Wisconsin, but they opted for available land in Michigan and Iowa on the advice of land developers in New York.<sup>79</sup> While Van Raalte and Scholte overlooked Wisconsin, other large groups of Dutch immigrants continued to make the rolling hills north and west of Milwaukee their destination during the late 1800s.

Along with Protestant Dutch, another important group of Dutch immigrants called the Flemish, settled in Wisconsin during the mid-1840s. Originally from the southern part of the Netherlands and Belgium, the Flemish were culturally Dutch and Catholic. The Flemish, found themselves living in Belgium after it separated from the United Netherlands, where they were discriminated against by the French speaking majority. Like their Protestant counterparts, the Flemish also sought a physical and spiritual refuge in the United States. In many cases, Flemish immigrants often lost their ethnicity more quickly than their Protestant counterparts because the Catholic church integrated the immigrants into the American culture, avoiding religious and ethnic confrontation. The Wisconsin Flemish community, however,

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<sup>79</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 83-85; VanHinte, Netherlanders in America, 132-36.

remained segregated and maintained their ethnicity like the Dutch immigrants of Wisconsin, Michigan and Iowa.<sup>80</sup>

In 1887, Andrew Wormser contracted wanderlust and left Wisconsin for a church near Dr. Van Raalte's settlement of Holland in western Michigan. Andrew had accepted a call to the First Reformed Church of Grand Haven, the church of Dr. Seine Bolks, a famous preacher from Wormser's former home town in the Netherlands. Following his mentor Dr. Van Raalte, Dr. Bolks had led a large group of Dutch religious dissenters from Hellendorn, and settled south of Holland, Michigan, in 1847.<sup>81</sup>

After he established the Dutch community in Grand Haven, and served its First Reformed Church, Dr. Bolks joined Henry Hospers in establishing the Sioux County Dutch settlement in Iowa. Even though he was overshadowed by VanRaalte and Scholte, Seine Bolks is remembered for his contributions as minister, doctor and land developer.<sup>82</sup> Men like Bolks, VanRaalte, Scholte, Hospers, and Andrew Wormser often crossed paths in America's Dutch settlements, creating a functioning model of spiritual and civic leader that Dutch immigrants

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<sup>80</sup> After Andrew Wormser had established his settlements of Dutch immigrants in southcentral Montana during the 1890s, other Dutch locators followed his lead and encouraged Dutch Catholics from Wisconsin and the Netherlands to settle in northcentral Montana. Most famous of the Montana locators who encouraged the Dutch Catholic immigrants were W.E. Workman and Father James Vermaat representing the Great Northern Railroad, and Father Victor De Brabondere (more commonly know as Father Day) who, along with his settlement activity, is also remembered as builder of Helena's Gothic Cathedral. Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 217-24, 450-52, 552-28; VanHinte, Netherlanders in America, 173-83, 299-301, 698-99.

<sup>81</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 144-147; VanHinte, Netherlanders in America, 149-50.

<sup>82</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 348-49, 502-03; VanHinte, Netherlanders in America, 496-500.

readily followed.

While serving the Grand Haven congregation in 1889, Andrew Wormser developed bronchial trouble. In 1890, Andrew went on a journey to the West looking for a healthier climate. But Andrew's adventure in the West became more than just a quest for a healthful alternative to Michigan.

Rev. Wormser traveled the West by railroad with nine companions. A group of land investors located in Michigan and Chicago provided the finances and tickets for Andrew and his friends. While traveling across the northern tier of the western states, Andrew and his friends became favorably impressed with Montana as a location for immigrant settlement.<sup>83</sup>

Rev. Wormser returned alone to Montana later in 1890, and began an independent ministry at Fort Benton in cooperation with the Presbyterian Church. In June of 1891, the Presbyterian Church welcomed Andrew into full association as a pastor. By the spring of the next year, Andrew was commissioned to carry out mission activity in the Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin Valleys located at the headwaters of the Missouri River.<sup>84</sup>

In his next two years of association with the Presbyterian Church, Rev. Wormser became the Superintendent of Domestic Missions and organized the Presbyterian Synod of Montana. Having established the synod, Rev. Wormser became

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<sup>83</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 403.

<sup>84</sup> Patricia, McKinney, Presbyterianism in Montana, Its First Hundred Years, (np., nd.), 88; "Andrew Wormser," Progressive Men of Montana, 500.

its first president, and served as its Synodical Superintendent of Domestic Missions and Sunday School Work. Rev Wormser also joined the Bozeman Ministerial conference in 1892, and became the editor of The Light of the Valley, a monthly newspaper published in Bozeman, Montana from 1892 to 1894.<sup>85</sup>

As director of mission work in southwestern Montana for the Presbyterian Church, Rev. Wormser was encouraged to travel and become familiar with the landscape. As a result of his travels and his contacts with a land hungry immigrant in the Midwest, Andrew became a prime candidate for frontier locator. In 1891, Andrew became an agent for the West Gallatin Irrigation Company, headed by a group of New York financiers.<sup>86</sup>

Later in 1891 the first group of Dutch settlers arrived in Montana, after Rev. Wormser did some rather convincing recruitment in the Netherlands and the Midwest. In 1892 Andrew organized these settlers into the First Holland Presbyterian Church of Manhattan. After meeting in Manhattan for twelve years, the congregation moved seven miles south near the geographic center of their immigrant community, and built their church on a knoll to the east of the village of Amsterdam. In 1904, the congregation and their church at

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<sup>85</sup> McKinney, Presbyterianism in Montana, 66; Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 405.

<sup>86</sup> Francis Nevin, Manhattan Omnibus: Stories of Historical Interest of Manhattan and its Surrounding Communities, (np., nd.), 267-68; Manhattan Area History Book Committee, Manhattan Montana: From its beginnings in 1860's through the present 1986, (Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Co., 1986), 12; Churchill Historical Society, A Goodly Heritage: History of the Churchill and Amsterdam Area of Montana, (Bozeman, MT: Colorworld, 1978), 2; Kroes, Persistence of Ethnicity, 45; Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 403.

Church Hill became known as the First Christian Reformed Church of Manhattan.<sup>87</sup>

In 1894, Andrew Wormser disassociated himself for unknown reasons from Montana's Presbyterian Synod. After a short hiatus from the ministry when he became more heavily involved in land speculation, Andrew became the pastor of the newly formed Reformed Church at Wormser City, Montana in 1896. As a minister in the Reformed Church Wormser could have closer contact and more influence in his newly established Dutch community in southcentral Montana. Andrew ministered to the congregation from 1896 to 1900, but this was his last active ministry.<sup>88</sup>

As a minister, Andrew Wormser was able to capture and extend his vision of settlement to Dutch immigrants. The ministry, therefore, became a vehicle for Andrew to explore and exploit the West. In 1900, Andrew left the active ministry to devote his total energy to his troubled settlement scheme at Wormser City. The journey to Wormser City for Andrew Wormser, however, had begun nine years earlier as an agent of the Manhattan Malting Company, in the Gallatin Valley of southwest Montana.

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<sup>87</sup> Meinte Schuurmans, "The Church and Assimilation in an Isolated National Group: A Study of the Role of the Christian Reformed Church in the Dutch Community near Manhattan, Montana," 55-56; Churchill Historical Society, A Goodly Heritage, 25.

<sup>88</sup> Charles Edward Corwin, A Manual of the Reformed Church in America 1628-1922, 599; Peter N. Van Den Berge, Historical Directory of the Reformed Church in America, 1628-1978, 210.

## CHAPTER 4

GALLATIN VALLEY: HERITAGE, PROMISE, AND  
PROSPERITY

Undoubtedly it is not only church and faith that have cemented the Dutch community in the Gallatin Valley but also ethnic consciousness.

-Rob Kroes<sup>89</sup>

Traveling south of Manhattan today on Route 288, you will encounter one of the most productive agricultural areas of the Gallatin Valley, and quite possibly the state of Montana.<sup>90</sup> Just outside Manhattan, as the road begins to climb a gentle grade, short grass prairie gives way to fields of grain, alfalfa and potatoes. As the road continues south, you encounter buildings and scenery typical of Montana's western landscape.

However, along side the meandering irrigation ditches and weathered corrals are artifacts of the area's ethnic background, mailboxes that carry Dutch surnames, black and white Fresian Holstien cows, carefully groomed beds of colorful tulips, and small wooden windmills bravely facing

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<sup>89</sup> Kroes, The Persistence of Ethnicity, 8-9.

<sup>90</sup> William DeYoung and L.H. Smith, Soil Survey of the Gallatin Valley Area, Montana, no.16, (Washington: GPO, 1936), 17-21.

the winds that blow across the valley floor.<sup>91</sup>

In the Gallatin Valley, climate and natural geography combine to provide a favorable environment for agriculture. However, the productivity and success of the western end of the valley is in part due to the descendants of Dutch settlers, and the man who brought the first immigrant Dutch to this isolated Intermountain valley, Andrew Wormser.

The Gallatin Valley is what geographers call a "park." This natural phenomenon is found throughout the Rocky Mountains where a large valley is surrounded by mountain ranges. The Gallatin Valley is nearly surrounded east to west by four mountain ranges respectively, the Bridger, Gallatin, Madison, and Tobacco Root Mountains. While the valley is partly open to the north, the northern quadrant consists of an ancient mountain range and fault line called the Horseshoe Hills. The Gallatin, Madison and Jefferson Rivers drain the mountains and valley, and join together on the northwestern edge of the park to form the headwaters of the Missouri River.

The Gallatin Valley is approximately 575 square miles, with an elevation of 4,000 to 6,000 feet. The climate of the valley is considered "continental," with a mean temperature in the lower 40s, and an average rainfall of 14 inches. The valley's mountainous fringe contains 9,000 foot peaks that provide snow melt to the perennial streams that interlace the

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<sup>91</sup> Rob Kroes, ed. The American West: As seen by Europeans and Americans European Contributions to American Studies, vol. 24 (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Free University Press, 1989), 166-180.

valley floor.<sup>92</sup>

Visitors to the valley recognized its potential for agriculture in the mid-1800s. During the late 1800s, expatriate miners from the various mining districts of western Montana relocated their families to the Gallatin Valley and engaged a lifestyle of ranching and farming. These early settlers from Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee supplied the mining cities of Bannack, Virginia City, Diamond City, and Helena with produce and meat. The new residents of the Gallatin Valley turned it into what was termed by some "the granary of Montana," and by others "the Nile of North America."<sup>93</sup> When the railroad arrived in 1883, Gallatin Valley's agriculture reached into an ever expanding national market and the valley became nationally recognized.

Andrew Wormser's first visit to the Gallatin Valley was not precisely recorded, but it is generally accepted that he visited the area before 1890 on a reconnaissance trip for Midwestern real estate developers. Andrew wrote of his journeys around the West in glowing terms in his book Verspreide Geschriften, Heir een weinig, Daar een Weinig.<sup>94</sup>

It was on this early trip, after visiting the successful Mormon experiment in Utah, that Andrew became convinced that an inclusive and tightly controlled settlement could succeed

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 2-3.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 4-9; John A. Alwin, Western Montana: A Portrait of the Land and its People Montana Geographic Series, no. 5 (Helena, MT:Montana Magazine, Inc., 1983), 77-79; for an undated Booster pamphlet see Gallatin Valley: Nile of North America, (np., nd.), at Gallatin County Historical Society.

<sup>94</sup> Wormser, Verspreide Geschriften, 149-59, 187-204.

in the arid West, if it utilized irrigation .<sup>95</sup> Andrew was so convinced of the importance of irrigation in the West that he became a frequent participant in the Irrigation Congresses that met to promote it.<sup>96</sup>

Andrew Wormser's visits to southwestern Montana convinced him that the area had the climate and soil that would attract large numbers of Dutch immigrant farmers. He singled out the Gallatin Valley because it contained three necessary components for successful development: an abundance of unoccupied land, water for irrigation, and a financial infrastructure to promote large scale agriculture. The added bonus of a railroad would bring immigrants to the valley and transport the excess crops of the immigrant farmers once they expanded beyond subsistence agriculture.

Andrew Wormser's ties to financial interests in New York, Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin were well established and provided a flow of capital for his settlement projects.<sup>97</sup> His numerous trips between the West, the Midwest, and the Netherlands also suggest Andrew received a considerable amount of outside funding even though records are incomplete.<sup>98</sup> It is known, however, that Henry Altenbrand's Manhattan Malting Company and its subsidiary the West Gallatin Irrigation Company, provided Andrew with money and

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 160-86.

<sup>96</sup> "Andrew Wormser," Progressive Men of Montana, 501.

<sup>97</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 403; Kroes, The Persistence of Ethnicity, 45.

<sup>98</sup> Records of Andrew's financial associations in or out of the West are as of yet unavailable, and with only a few exceptions are there any indications that his financial activities were anything but honest. See Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 501.

samples of produce, photographs, and literature to attract settlers to the Gallatin Valley.<sup>99</sup>

In 1889, a group of wealthy maltsters from New York and Brooklyn learned of the Gallatin Valley's high quality barley, and under the leadership of Henry Altenbrand, Sr., formed the Manhattan Malting Company. Henry Altenbrand was joined by Jacob Rupert, owner of the largest brewery in the world, and George Kinkel, Jr., whose father owned the New York Yankees baseball team. Altenbrand, Rupert, Kinkel and two other maltsters, John Gillig and Frank Merges, proceeded to purchase 13,000 acres in western Gallatin Valley south of Manhattan, an area which in 1889 was known as Moreland.<sup>100</sup>

The land Altenbrand and his associates chose is today recognized as the valley's most productive soil. A band of earth that stretches south from Manhattan for fifteen miles contains what is known as "Amsterdam silt loam." The soil has a mulch like texture containing little gravel, and is interspersed with lava dust that washed up on the western shore of an ancient lake that once covered the valley floor.<sup>101</sup> This band of soil contains few natural streams, but has a topography that ranges from flat prairie to gentle rolling hills. Most importantly, the land the Manhattan Malting Company purchased was well suited to irrigation.

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<sup>99</sup> Robert G. Dunbar, "The Economic Development of the Gallatin Valley," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, vol. 47 (October, 1956): 119; Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 403; Nevin, Manhattan Omnibus, 267; Churchill-Amsterdam Historical Society, A Goodly Heritage, 2.

<sup>100</sup> Nevin, Manhattan Omnibus, 177, 188.

<sup>101</sup> DeYoung and Smith, Soil Survey, 2, 17.

When Henry Altenbrand and Andrew Wormser arrived in Manhattan, the area already had a successful irrigation project underway. The town and a canal was named after a Mr. Moreland, one of Gallatin Valley's first major land developers. Moreland's canal stretched from the West Gallatin River to the 10,000 acre Moreland Ranch, located near the town of Hamilton, three miles south of Manhattan.<sup>102</sup> Purchased in 1889 by the Manhattan Malting Company, Moreland's ranch and canal became the cornerstone of its enterprise. In 1890, Altenbrand and his fellow maltsters proceeded to build a large malting plant and paper mill at Moreland, and the officers of the company, in an attempt to make the town sound more cosmopolitan, changed its name to Manhattan.<sup>103</sup>

Soon after they set up business in southwestern Montana, the directors of the Manhattan Malting Company formed the West Gallatin Irrigation Company. The West Gallatin Irrigation Company was incorporated with the intent of constructing a large irrigation ditch later called the Highline Canal. The canal would provide water to 53,000 acres adjacent to the Manhattan Malting Company's holdings, which at the time was owned in "checkerboard fashion" by the Northern Pacific Railroad and the United States government. Once the land was purchased from the railroad by the Malting Company, and the federal government opened the land to

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<sup>102</sup> Nevin, Manhattan Omnibus, 165.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 178.

homesteading, the West Gallatin Irrigation Company would sell its water to the new settlers.<sup>104</sup>

Henry Altenbrand and his associates wished to attract Dutch settlers to their land, and they needed an agent who could attract the settlers they preferred. Henry Altenbrand, a devout Presbyterian, turned to Rev. Andrew Wormser, the Presbyterian Church's superintendent of missions in western Montana to fill the job. In order to attract and settle Dutch farmers from the Midwest and immigrants from the Netherlands, Altenbrand recognized the need for an ordained Reformed minister as an emissary. By engaging a Reformed minister to do his recruiting, Altenbrand took advantage of an already well established pattern for Dutch immigration and settlement.

Rev. Andrew Wormser proved to be an excellent choice for locator. While serving as a missionary in the Presbyterian Church, Rev. Wormser had retained his Reformed ministerial credentials and his association with many religious dissenters in the Netherlands and the Midwest who wished to immigrate. Rev. Wormser made two trips to Michigan between 1890 and 1891 exploring possibilities of Dutch settlement in Montana.<sup>105</sup>

Andrew Wormser had already accumulated some experience locating immigrant settlers for the Dearborn Canal Company of Helena. Under the leadership of Donald Bradsford, L. V. S.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 177.

<sup>105</sup> Bozeman Chronicle, 3 December 1948.

Ames, and Henry Semple Ames in 1888, the Dearborn Canal Company was the first irrigation company in Montana to take advantage of legislation that distributed land under the Carey Land Act.<sup>106</sup> In 1889, the officers of the Dearborn Canal Company contacted Andrew Wormser to assist them in their efforts to make their development venture more attractive to Dutch immigrants. Andrew translated the company's promotional pamphlet into the Dutch language in an attempt to attract potential Dutch immigrants.

The promotional brochure entitled, Dearborn Kanal Co. [Dearborn Canal Company], urged Dutch immigrants to opt for an adventure in settlement in a valley north of Helena bisected by the Dearborn River.<sup>107</sup> The development company promoted farming with irrigation in an area previously known only for dry land farming. Andrew Wormser's Dutch translation, following the claims of the English version, said that farming with irrigation would insure a "full crop every season." More importantly, the use of irrigation in Montana would create "wealth from the water, sunshine, and soil." To endorse the information contained in the pamphlet, Andrew allowed his name to be printed on the brochure. Although Andrew had not established a permanent home in Montana, he jointly listed his address as Helena and the Netherlands.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Lesley M. Heathcote, "The Montana Arid Land Grant Commission 1895-1903," Agricultural History, vol. 38, no. 2 (April, 1964): 3.

<sup>107</sup> Dearborn Kanaal Company (New York: The South Publishing Co., nd.)

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

To encourage Dutch immigrants, Andrew Wormser and the Dearborn Canal Company assured their readers that farming with irrigation would be beneficial to them and the land,

Het is gunsig bekend gewarden our gyne voordeelige uitbomlen, Geeft droge landen eengraat voordeel oversteken waar regen valt, verdrievoodigt de waarde van ket land, waar regen velt. [(Irrigation) has become popular because of profitable returns, it gives arid land a larger advantage over rainfall areas, and will increase threefold the value of land having rainfall.]<sup>109</sup>

Even though it enjoyed a vanguard position in irrigation development in Montana, the Dearborn Canal Company was not particularly successful. In 1900, three years after Andrew Wormser had established his Holland Irrigation Company in Sweet Grass County, the officers of the Dearborn Canal Co. appealed to Montana's Arid Land Grant Commission (ALGC) for assistance in their troubled land development. The ALGC was set up by the state legislature to administer the one million acres given to the state by the national government for reclamation. The ALGC would help fund the water systems that developers constructed on the government land with state issued bonds. The sale of the bonds would guarantee the developers a return for their investment on the water system and guarantee settlers a continuous flow of water for their

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 30.

crops.<sup>110</sup>

With three of their company's trustees on the five member Arid Land Commission, the Dearborn Canal Co. appeared to be in a position to take advantage of the Carey Land Grant legislation. However, the company did not receive any assistance because in 1900 the commission and its members came under intense scrutiny from the legislature for financial inconsistencies, particularly with District No. 2, Andrew Wormser's Holland Irrigation Company project in Sweet Grass County. The legislature disbanded the commission in 1903, and the Dearborn Canal Co. lost its favorable position and consequently its much needed assistance.<sup>111</sup>

While Andrew Wormser's experience with the Dearborn Canal Company was fundamental to his immigrant locating in Montana, his membership and subsequent activity with the Presbyterian Church became the vehicle for his contacts and influence on immigrants who sought to come to Montana. After his brief activity north of Helena with the Dearborn Canal Company, Andrew concentrated his activities in the Gallatin Valley and areas adjacent to the valley. As an official of the Presbyterian Synod in Montana, Rev. Wormser traveled extensively throughout southwestern Montana coming in contact with established settlers and businesses, as well as newcomers to the area.

In 1891, Rev. Wormser's efforts paid off when he helped

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<sup>110</sup> Heathcote, "The Montana arid Land Grant Commission 1895-1903," 9; Helena Independent, 29 December 1900.

<sup>111</sup> Heathcote, "The Montana Arid Land Grant Commission 1895-1903," 10.

establish ten Dutch settlers from the Netherlands and the Midwest in Manhattan. These vanguards of Dutch settlement, were sandwiched into a small wooden building with only blankets for walls. From this inauspicious beginning in a structure the immigrants called "Castle Gardens," named after the place they were detained on Ellis Island, the immigrants moved out onto the land selected for them by Andrew Wormser and the West Gallatin Irrigation Company along Godfrey Creek, an area south of Churchill.<sup>112</sup>

In April of the next year, the Advent Courier of Bozeman announced that "about forty" Dutch settlers arrived from Michigan and the Netherlands, and more were expected to arrive soon.<sup>113</sup> As a result of Andrew Wormser's promotion and locating, Dutch settlers continued to arrive in Manhattan throughout 1892. Building on the success of 1891 and 1892, Andrew continued to recruit more Dutch immigrants. In January of 1893, the Advent Courier reported that "quite a number of Hollanders were expected in Manhattan March 1st," and followed with another story in May proclaiming "three more Dutch settlers arrived with a large number expected that same week."<sup>114</sup>

Starting with the original ten settlers, the colony of Dutch immigrants grew to include twenty-five families in 1895. By 1898, the Dutch settlement increased to fifty

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<sup>112</sup> Churchill-Amsterdam Historical Society, A Goodly Heritage, 4; Bozeman Chronicle, 10 December 1948.

<sup>113</sup> Avant Courier, 9 April 1892.

<sup>114</sup> Avant Courier, 15 May 1893.

families. Through either a direct or indirect connection with Andrew Wormser, by 1911 the settlement totaled eighty-five Dutch families.

News of Andrew Wormser's successful settlement activity in the Gallatin Valley began to appear in 1894 in Montana newspapers and Dutch language newspapers printed in Michigan and Iowa.<sup>115</sup> One of the most widely circulated articles was a letter written by D.J. Walvoord, who later became an important partner in Andrew's Holland Irrigation Project.<sup>116</sup> Walvoord described his adventure to Montana, giving Andrew Wormser a great deal of the credit for the success of Manhattan's Dutch settlement.

Traveling to Montana in what he called a "harvest excursion," Walvoord arrived in Manhattan in the fall of 1894. Given the royal treatment, Walvoord was met at the railroad station by Rev. Wormser and Rev. VandenHoek of Chicago, and taken to the Manhattan Hotel for breakfast. Rev. VandenHoek, on his second visit to Montana, wanted to see for himself the progress of Manhattan's Dutch settlers, and compare the settlement to other settlements in Washington where he had just visited. Andrew proceeded to escort Walvoord and VandenHoek on a tour of the valley visiting Dutch settlers.

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<sup>115</sup> Several articles appeared about Andrew Wormser's settlement activity in De Volksvriend, a Dutch language newspaper published in Orange City, and in De Grondwet and De Hope both published in Holland, Michigan between 1892-1903.

<sup>116</sup> Avant Courier, 2 February 1895.

Inspired by the fertility and beauty of the valley,  
Walvoord wrote,

After breakfast we took a ride in the surrounding country, visited the Holland settlers, who one and all were satisfied that their lines had fallen in such pleasant places. Their narration of the wonderful fertility of the soil, and of the healthy climate of their newly chosen homes, was only excelled by what my own eyes beheld; and I may state right here, that fertile as our good state of Wisconsin is I never saw such fields of grain and other produce...<sup>117</sup>

Completely taken by the success of Andrew Wormser's locating activities, D.J. Walvoord decided to stay and become a school teacher in a new school that was to be opened in the Dutch settlement. Rev. VandenHoek also wrote, in a letter published in 1892, that on this tour of the valley he encountered wheat so tall that he couldn't see over it.<sup>118</sup>

Not all the information flowing from Manhattan's Dutch settlement resonated positively, nor were the stories all supportive of Andrew Wormser.<sup>119</sup> Andrew alluded to the negative reports in an article he published in 1894, and identified a group of malcontents who were "an undesirable element" who "hindered the growth and development" of the

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> De Hope, 24 August 1892.

<sup>119</sup> De Ommelander, 2 July 1892; De Hope, 7 September 1892.

settlement.<sup>120</sup> It was this faction of Dutch settlers, in part unprepared for frontier life and disillusioned by promises of settlement, who produced a slow but steady trickle of complaints back to their relatives in the Netherlands and the Midwest that Andrew feared could undermine public opinion of Dutch settlement in Montana.

One immigrant by the name of Wasters wrote to relatives that as for settlement in Montana, "it is all lies, deceit and hyperbole...the Reverend Wormser is only in it for the money...all he speaks is untruth."<sup>121</sup> Another immigrant, A. Vogel Sr., echoed Wasters' disappointment when he wrote, "Montana was excellent for grazing, but it was a dry country where gambling and violence was prevalent."<sup>122</sup> Most damaging of the immigrant letters were the ones sent in 1892 by M. Powder, A. Van Woudenberg, B. Wrester Dye, and P.C. Van Doeberg, all of Manhattan. All complained that Andrew Wormser's presentations in the Netherlands were exaggerations of the truth, and that a drought had prevented them from growing vegetables and corn. The letters also contained references to stony land, changeable weather, dry air, and frosty nights. Most irritating was the complaint that they had to work on Sunday to make ends meet. Andrew Wormser recognized the danger of negative reports in the land development business, and countered the potentially damaging letters with a widely published report initiated by Montana's

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<sup>120</sup> The Light of the Valley, May 1894.

<sup>121</sup> Kroes, Persistence of Ethnicity, 46.

<sup>122</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 405.

governor, Joseph A. Toole.

Governor Toole commissioned a knowledgeable Bozeman citizen, Colonel Charles A. Gregory, to write a response addressing some of the misgivings about the state and the trustworthiness of Andrew Wormser that the Dutch settlers had expressed. Gregory wrote the report on December 12, 1891 in Bozeman, and it was endorsed by state officials on December 14, in Helena, and published a month later in two of the major Dutch newspapers in the Midwest, on January 12 and 13, 1892.<sup>123</sup> The speed with which the report traveled is remarkable even by modern standards, but the swiftness accented the urgency of the matter as seen by those who wished to preserve fragile public opinion.

Col. Gregory's article "Onwaarhiden Omtrent of Montana [Lies Concerning Montana]" was a lengthy report to Gov. Toole which addressed the fitness of Montana as a state in which to settle, and the charges which were raised by unhappy Dutch immigrants.<sup>124</sup> The report focused on two general themes, the harshness of the climate and the "wildness" of the state.

As for the harshness of the climate, especially the cold winters and dry summers, Gregory wrote that Montana's winters were warmer than the ones in Wisconsin, Minnesota, or Iowa. He continued that even though the climate was dry, the potential for agriculture was enhanced by winter snowpack in the mountains which stored an abundance of water for

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<sup>123</sup> De Grondwet, 12 January 1892; De Hope, 13 January 1892.

<sup>124</sup> De Grondwet, 12 January 1892.

irrigation. As for the "wildness," Gregory pointed out that the state contained 150,000 industrious people living in prosperous mining and agricultural districts, and that even though there were Indians,

...Hi is zoo reheel verwijidert van de stricken waar de blanket woven dot men hem gevoegelijk kin raugschikkenop deselfde list awls de poor gored vertrokken buffet. [He is so completely removed from the areas where white men live that people classify the Indian in the same category as the fast disappearing buffalo.]<sup>125</sup>

To add a weight to Col. Gregory's letter, it was endorsed by a long list of leading citizens that included the secretary of Bozeman's Chamber of Commerce; editor of the Bozeman Courier; Gallatin Valley bankers, lawyers, and ministers; and citizens of the Netherlands. In the middle of the list was Dr. A. Wormser, identified as a minister from Fort Benton. Governor Toole endorsed the letter along with the secretary of state, state treasurer, state auditor, and superintendent of public education.

Col. Gregory's letter was designed to help dissipate rumors outside the state, but Andrew Wormser still had to deal with individuals who were unhappy in the growing Dutch settlement. When given the opportunity, Andrew used the pulpit in the local churches to address problems of settlement. On one such occasion, Andrew encountered a group

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

of Dutch settlers around Amsterdam and Churchill who were unhappy with the lack of water delivered by the High Line Canal. Rev. Wormser, using his well honed ability as an orator and salesman, answered their challenge with a sermon on II Kings 3:18 which simply stated, "Thus saith the Lord, 'make this valley full of ditches.'" This sermon became a catalyst for the Dutch parishioners, and encouraged the settlers to begin digging the Low Line Canal that nearly doubled the amount of water delivered to the fields surrounding the community.<sup>126</sup>

One very important enterprise related to his contact with the Presbyterian Church was his position as editor and publisher of the church's voice in Montana, The Light of the Valley. The Light of the Valley was a monthly newspaper first published by Reverend Edwin M. Ellis at Stevensville, Montana in 1889. Along with information and news regarding Montana's Presbyterian Church, The Light of the Valley contained national and international news briefs, human interest editorials, and ads that might appeal to a broader readership not directly associated with the church. Shortly after Andrew Wormser took over the monthly in 1892, it was moved to Bozeman, Montana.

Between 1892 and 1894, Rev. Wormser continued the original intent of the monthly, that is to promote and provide information about Presbyterianism in Montana. However, in several editions, Andrew used the paper as a

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<sup>126</sup> Churchill-Amsterdam Historical Society, A Goodly Heritage, 71; Dick C. Flikkema, Unrecorded interview with author, 17 January 1996.

sounding board for his views on issues related to the church, national and international events, and the growing Dutch community in the Gallatin Valley. Andrew also used the paper to promote different business ventures related to his family, and to gain name recognition around Montana. Articles associated with Dutch immigrants appeared along with articles that described the advantages of settlement in the Gallatin Valley.

In 1894, Rev. Wormser wrote a lengthy article on Gallatin Valley's Second Holland Presbyterian Church located seven miles south of Manhattan at the present site of Churchill, Montana. Even though the Dutch immigrants who attended this church had been experiencing some difficulties with finances and settlement, Andrew boasted of the fine roads, fences, and homes that were built in the settlement. With fields plowed and the return of spring, Andrew praised the community's health and optimism,

One or two years of good crops and better markets and the future of the colony will be assured, and people will come flocking in. It is a matter of congratulations, that not one of our farmers have left discouraged...In future years they and their posterity will look back upon all this with happy thoughts and pleasant recollections, and the meetings in the barns and kitchens will become part of a proud history.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> The Light of the Valley, May 1894.

The Light of the Valley was initially designed to serve more than the grandiose schemes of one man, but by 1894 the newspaper was a one man operation. In 1894, Rev. Wormser left the Presbyterian church, returned to the Reformed Church, and moved to Wormser City. With Rev. Wormser's departure from the Presbyterian Church, The Light of the Valley ceased to exist.<sup>128</sup>

With the first Dutch community secure by 1894, Andrew Wormser set out on a new challenge to create a second major Dutch settlement that would rival Gallatin Valley's colony. While his settlement activity around Amsterdam and Churchill was in concert with the Manhattan Malting and West Gallatin Irrigation Companies, Andrew's new settlement would be dependent only on him as indicated in the name he gave it, Wormser City. While Andrew attempted to manipulate financial and governmental institutions in order to succeed, he learned that a successful land developer was very dependent on two factors over which he had no control: climate and geography.

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<sup>128</sup> McKinney, Presbyterianism in Montana, 66.

## CHAPTER 5

SWEET GRASS COUNTY: PROMISE, REALITY,  
AND ABANDONMENT

There is a hopeful air about the people with the return of spring and new activity, notwithstanding the fact of the hardships and difficulties peculiar to the first years of a new settlement..they continue to look for a higher blessing and assistance; and in course of time..they will prosper and become a blessing...

-Andrew Wormser<sup>129</sup>

Andrew Wormser became one of the largest landowners in Sweet Grass County between the years of 1895 and 1906. During this time, Wormser continued to attract immigrants and settlers to Montana, established a town, and began construction of an irrigation project that was considered by his contemporaries the largest of its kind in the Trans-Mississippi West outside of California.<sup>130</sup> Traveling north out of Big Timber, Montana on U.S. 191, you can discover an operating irrigation canal, a renovated barn, depressions and decaying foundations of buildings, and traces of ditches that

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<sup>129</sup> The Light of the Valley, May 1894.

<sup>130</sup> The Rocky Mountain Husbandman, 1 April 1897; "Andrew Wormser," Progressive Men of Montana, 500; Tri County Atlas: Sweet Grass, and Carbon Counties, (Big Timber, MT: Henry and Geiger, 1902), 9-10; Two undated newspaper articles, ca. 1898, contained in the Arid Land Grant Commission 1895-1903, Record Series 31, box 1 at the Montana State Archives.

are reminders of Wormser City and the Holland Irrigation Company. In an area that could be considered a rural backwater of the Intermountain West, ranch layout, water adjudication, and community identity still bear the imprint of Andrew Wormser's activities.

Andrew Wormser chose to carry out his dreams in Sweet Grass County, located in south central Montana's Yellowstone Basin. Bisecting the county from west to east, the Yellowstone River is a barrier between the northern and southern sections of the county. The landscape on either side of this natural division acts as a large drainage basin for one of the country's last free flowing rivers. The northern part of the county has been dominated by agricultural activity; the southern portion by developers and settlers in pursuit of minerals and lumbering. Even though traditional industries are still significant today, their importance may soon be eclipsed by tourist enterprises located in Big Timber that hope to promote the West as a restorative sanctuary for harried urban residents.

Along the western edge of Sweet Grass county, stretching northward from the Yellowstone River, the Crazy Mountains dominate the landscape. Within the space of twenty miles, the land rises from the wooded banks of the Yellowstone to glaciated peaks that top 7000 feet. Separated from other nearby mountain ranges by open prairie, rolling uplands, and stream breaks, the Crazy Mountains run approximately fifteen miles from north to south and thirty miles east to west. The

highest peaks of the range have year-round snowfields that feed forty high country lakes. The concentration of ice, snow and lakes provide the headwaters for the Musselshell and Shield Rivers on the north and west, and the Sweet Grass and Big Timber Creeks to the east.

The Crazies not only provide the Yellowstone basin with the most dramatic contrast in landscape, for decades they have been a landmark for travelers in south central Montana. In essence, the Crazies are an oval shaped island of moisture sending water down into the arid lowlands, subsequently attracting developers and settlers as early as 1873.<sup>131</sup>

Newly arrived settlers had to adjust to a variety of climate and soil conditions in the Big Timber Creek watershed that lays east of the Crazy mountains and north of the Yellowstone River. Rainfall varied from year to year, averaging between nine and twenty inches, with cycles of drought necessitating irrigation for cultivated land. The temperatures could range between -47° and 110° Fahrenheit, with average temperatures of 26° in January, to 70° in July. The growing season could be 123 days long, unless it was cut short by a late spring, or early fall frost.<sup>132</sup>

Newcomers to the county either settled on the undifferentiated alluvial soils that were adaptable to irrigation, or along the subirrigated stream banks. Later

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<sup>131</sup> Mark Meloy, Islands on the Prairie, Montana Geographic Series, no. 13, (Helena, MT: Montana Magazine, Inc., 1987), 100-101.

<sup>132</sup> Water Resources Survey: Sweet Grass County Montana, (Helena, MT: State Engineer's Office, 1950), 6.

arrivals fanned out into the foothills and rolling uplands which extended eastward from the Crazy mountains. As the land descended from the Crazies, the soil varied in texture, composition and water holding capacity. The loams and alluvial wash type soils had parent materials that contained generous portions of igneous rock, sand stone, and shale. All the soils north of the Yellowstone River silt loams shared a common characteristic in a lack of organic material, which made the land less suitable for cultivation.<sup>133</sup>

As the settlers distanced themselves from the Yellowstone River and settled on soils that retained a large portion of soluble mineral salts, care had to be taken to drain accumulated water, or large concentrations of salt would appear. Developers and settlers quickly recognized the alluvial-loam soil types, with an available source of water cascading down the slopes of the Crazy Mountains, as the most desirable for settlement and cultivation. Still later colonists spread eastward from the sanctuary of moisture that the Crazies provided, and turned to grazing livestock rather than fight the lack of water necessary for cultivation of crops.<sup>134</sup>

The land adjacent to the Yellowstone River had an adequate supply of water for anyone who settled in the flood plain. For those who colonized the drier areas to the north of the river, the rugged Crazy mountains provided the

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 8-9.

settlers with creeks that flowed with a year around supply of snow melt. This unusual abundance of moisture could be diverted from the perennial creeks for irrigation. The mountain's reserve of water was dependable, and limited only during years of extremely dry weather.<sup>135</sup>

Good to average land, a moderate supply of moisture in all but dry years, nearby forests, and a rail link to the outside world provided the necessary amenities for growth and development in Sweet Grass county. However, care had to be taken by the settler, or developer to assess the constraints of these elements lest progressive growth could be turned into calculated disaster for all concerned.

During the late 1800s, three events irrevocably transformed the landscape and lives of the people of south central Montana: the opening of the western Crow Reservation to homesteading, the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and renewed interest in reclamation provided by the Desert and Carey Land Acts.<sup>136</sup> With low cost or free land, a promise of irrigation, and a dependable transportation system, Sweet Grass County by the end of the 1890s was

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>136</sup> Beginning in 1862 with the first Homestead Act, the federal government tried to disburse federal land by a succession of legislative recreations including: the Desert land Act, Timber Culture Act, Timber and Stone Act, the Swamp lands Act, the Cary Land Act, and the Reclamation Act. Each act guaranteed land in exchange for "settlement and improvement," with the exception of the Cary Land and Reclamation Acts which also required the settler to irrigate the land. The Cary Land Act, in 1894, was the first attempt of the federal government to settle the arid lands of the West by encouraging irrigation, or reclamation. The Cary Land Act gave any western state one million acres if it would irrigate the land, but the state, or developer couldn't use the land as collateral to raise money. Since the funds to build irrigation systems had to be raised privately, the act had only a small impact on irrigation. By 1900, 288,553 acres came under irrigation as a result of the act, only a small portion of the land under irrigation in the West by that same date.

perceived by developers as an area ripe for progress.

In 1895, Andrew Wormser purchased a half section of land eight miles north of the Yellowstone River in the Big Timber Creek Drainage. Along with the land, Andrew secured a rather large water right on Big Timber Creek. The creek was one of the larger perennial streams fed from a melting snowpack in the Crazy Mountains, ten miles to the west of Wormser's holdings. From his rather typical frontier homestead beginning, Andrew Wormser assembled an empire in meteoric fashion that reportedly encompassed in excess of 6,000 acres, grazed by over 3,000 head of sheep and cattle.<sup>137</sup>

Andrew Wormser arrived in Sweet Grass County just as the county had been formed from the eastern part of Gallatin County in 1895.<sup>138</sup> The northern part of Sweet Grass County had the potential for development with an abundance of open land divided in checkerboard fashion between the federal government and the Northern Pacific Railroad.<sup>139</sup> Under the Carey Land Act, passed in 1890, the U.S. government also provided additional land for homesteading if the state government would provide for the development of water carrying systems to reclaim the land for farming and ranching activities. In 1890, Montana's legislature established the Arid Land Grant Commission (ALGC) to administer reclamation projects, and disperse land to developers under the auspices

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<sup>137</sup> "Andrew Wormser," Progressive Men of Montana, 500.

<sup>138</sup> Grace Bates, Gallatin County: Places and Things Present and Past, (np., 1985), vii-xi.

<sup>139</sup> Big Timber Express, 1 January 1898.

of the Carey Land Act.<sup>140</sup> The state legislature also pressured the U.S. government to open the western part of the Crow Reservation to homesteading, since encroachment on these lands seemed inevitable with the arrival of the railroad and reclamation activity.

Andrew Wormser purchased his first parcel of land and water rights along the Big Timber Creek, in central Sweet Grass county in the summer of 1895.<sup>141</sup> Andrew became one of the first large developers of the newly formed county, and with his future acquisitions the largest land owner.<sup>142</sup> Within days of his first purchase, Andrew filed the "Articles of Incorporation for the Holland Irrigation Company," with the office of the Secretary of the State in Helena.<sup>143</sup>

The document of incorporation of the Holland Irrigation Company made clear Wormser's intent to create an enormous project and claim a large territory for development.<sup>144</sup> The

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<sup>140</sup> Under an act approved in 1895, the Arid Land grant Commission was set up to carry out the provisions of the Carey Land Act without creating any liability or indebtedness against the state. The Commission was to issue bonds to help the developers, but a portion of the money raised was to be retained by the state until the irrigation project was completed. The developers were responsible for getting settlers to improve the land, and they could sell the water to the settlers provided it was at a reasonable price. However, since the federal government held title to the land and not the state, the developer did not have any security for his investment. Even if the contract with the Commission was completed, the developer would have to wait for a return on his investment until the lands were sold and the state had received title for the lands.

<sup>141</sup> Sweet Grass County Index of Deeds, Grantee Book no. 1, 1266.

<sup>142</sup> Sweet Grass County Tax Record Books: 1898-1900, Sweet Grass County Index of Deeds, Grantee Book no. 1.

<sup>143</sup> "Articles of Incorporation of the Holland Irrigation Canal Company," Book M., page 379, 25 June 1895, Secretary of State, Helena, Montana.

<sup>144</sup> The Annual Statements filed with the Clerk and Recorder between 1899 -1902 indicated that the Holland Irrigation Company had a capital stock of \$150,000, and the Company's projected plan for irrigation indicated it was going to deliver water to 75,000 acres. See Rocky Mountain Husbandman, 1 April 1897.

company was to dig a canal to carry water for the purpose of "irrigating agricultural and grazing lands."<sup>145</sup> The canal had its head gate on Big Timber Creek in section twenty-three of township three north, range thirteen east, approximately thirteen miles north of Big Timber. The proposed canal was to run in a southeasterly direction eventually emptying into the Yellowstone River via Otter Creek, two miles east of Big Timber.

The corporation also had grandiose plans beyond its irrigation development,

...to purchase, hold layout, plot, develop lease, sell, deal in , or otherwise use or dispose of townsite, or of lots, blocks, or subdivisions...to own, operate, control purchase, sell or otherwise dispose of livestock...to operate, deal in any and all property necessary to properly and successfully transact and further said business... to purchase, erect or lease, buildings for residences or commercial purposes...to purchase deal in, sell, or otherwise dispose of grain, hay seeds, and all other farm products.<sup>146</sup>

The primary activity of the corporation was centered in Sweet Grass County, but the articles of incorporation allowed the

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

Holland Irrigation Company to spread its activities into adjacent Park, Meagher, Fergus, and Yellowstone counties.

Once Andrew Wormser had secured a legal status for his development, he went about acquiring in excess of 5,000 acres of land with the help of his wife Anna, and his adopted son Peter, through homesteads and outright purchases. Along with Wormser's land acquisitions, he was careful to get the control of water rights to each of his parcels of land. The most important of Wormser's water acquisitions was the deed he received from George and Mary Satch for 50,000 miner's inches of water out of Big Timber Creek in June of 1895.<sup>147</sup> Along with his other water rights, Andrew Wormser had firm control on the flow of water for irrigation in sixty sections of land, or the entire Big Timber Creek drainage north of Big Timber.<sup>148</sup>

In October, 1898, three years after Andrew Wormser started acquiring his land, he filed a townsite plat at the county court house.<sup>149</sup> This townsite was located ten miles north of Big Timber, half way to the town of Melville, on the north/south stage line to Harlowtown.

Located in the southeast quarter of section twenty-nine,

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<sup>147</sup> Sweet Grass County Index of Deeds, Grantee Book no. 1, 1274.

<sup>148</sup> Montana water rights are based on the doctrine of Prior Appropriation, which guarantees anyone the right to divert and use the water for a beneficial purpose. This interpretation of water rights, "first in time, first in line," was most useful in the West to miners and irrigators. In Montana, a "water right" did not imply ownership of water, but did imply the right to divert and use it. Montana law also allowed pioneer water developers to designate the amount of water appropriated, but did not require the appropriation to match actual water use or stream flow. This interpretation of water rights allowed for inflated water rights, denying water to other users and made it difficult to challenge the appropriator in court. See Water Resources Survey, 1-3.

<sup>149</sup> Plat Book, no. 1, page 5, 12 March 1895, Sweet Grass County Clerk and Recorder.

township three north, the town was in a section of land that Andrew Wormser had purchased from the Northern Pacific Railroad. Andrew laid out the town in eight square blocks, with a public square, and four avenues running east to west and four streets running north to south. Business lots surrounded the public square on three sides, fronting Michigan and Montana Avenues, and 2nd and 3rd Streets. Residential lots were to the south of the business lots running along Minnesota and Dakota Avenues, and 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Streets.<sup>150</sup> With an eye to the future, Andrew, Anna, and Peter all owned land that surrounded the townsite on the south and west sides.

Once his business and townsite were secure, Andrew Wormser set out to attract settlers to a colony that was patterned after the highly successful Dutch settlements of Iowa, Michigan, and his own Dutch settlement in the Gallatin Valley. Eventually twenty-two families, or approximately one hundred people from the Midwest and Holland came to the lands of Andrew Wormser and the Holland Irrigation Company.<sup>151</sup> These immigrant families settled in or near Wormser City when they arrived in Montana, helping the town to grow. At its peak, Wormser City had a post office, store/hotel, livery stable, cheese factory, church and a gold mine to the west of the town in the Crazies.<sup>152</sup> By 1901, the minister of the local

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 406; Pioneer Society of Sweet Grass County, Pioneer Memories Vol. 1, (Bozeman, MT:Bozeman Business Service, 1960), 284.

<sup>152</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 407.

church in Wormser City saw sufficient need to petition the ALGC for some land for a cemetery on a ridge to the east of the town.<sup>153</sup>

The success of Andrew Wormser's development schemes, Wormser City and the Holland Irrigation Company rested on many natural and human variables, most important of which was the good graces of the ALGC. Even though the goals of the ALGC and Andrew Wormser were similar, to develop and populate uninhabited areas, Andrew and the ALGC often didn't agree on the method and results. The ALGC wanted to disperse the land it acquired from the U.S. government at little expense, or liability to the state. Andrew Wormser was willing to develop the land for the State, but he wanted the financial security of state guaranteed bonds to assure his profit. Even though the ALGC and Andrew could agree in principle to develop the open spaces of southcentral Montana, misunderstanding and intrigue caused the complete breakdown of the first Carey Land Grant project of Sweet Grass County. The rise and fall of Wormser City and the Holland Irrigation Company, 1895 to 1903, roughly paralleled the lifetime of the ALGC.

Andrew Wormser's scheme was by far the most ambitious of the five projects managed by the ALGC.<sup>154</sup> Andrew convinced the ALGC to go along with a project that would include over 30,000 acres of unused government land, and about the same

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<sup>153</sup> John DeJongh, letter to ALGC, 13 May 1901.

<sup>154</sup> Heathcote, "The Arid Land Grant Commission 1895-1903," 5.

amount of land controlled at the time by the Northern Pacific Railroad. With the exception of Andrew, no one was quite sure exactly where this land was located. The land was reported to be at the same time both north and south of the Yellowstone River. Andrew Wormser's and his family's land, the holdings and ditch of the Holland Irrigation Company, and the Dutch immigrant land were all located north of Big Timber and the Yellowstone River. The exact whereabouts of Andrew's land prompted the ALGC to send a surveyor to Wormser City to establish just which land Andrew was claiming for reclamation. Confusion over the location of the land was only the beginning of the problems for Andrew and the ALGC. By 1913, the Andrew's development scheme had turned into a frontier tragic comedy.

When the ALGC hired a surveyor to locate Andrew Wormser's and the Holland Irrigation holdings, they turned to O.C. Finkelnberg. Finkelnberg was a certified surveyor, but he was also the same surveyor Andrew Wormser used to establish his townsite north of Big Timber. Finkelnberg's activities were in turn certified by Peter Wormser, Notary Public for Sweet Grass County. While this seeming collusion should perhaps have guaranteed favorable results, Finkelnberg complained to the ALGC that he didn't have enough time to complete his report, and that the settlers were not cooperating, resulting in inaccurate information.<sup>155</sup>

Additional troubles for Andrew Wormser followed in rapid

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<sup>155</sup> O. C. Finkelnberg, letters to ALGC, 17 October 1899, 24 October 1899.

succession. Joseph K. Toole, former governor of Montana and Wormser advocate, left the ALGC over a disagreement about the Holland Irrigation Company project. Toole felt that the first project of the ALGC, a project along the the Yellowstone River near Billings, should be completed before Andrew's Holland Irrigation Company plan was considered. In fact, the ALGC had five projects all going on at the same time with only Wormser's scheme making any progress at all. Toole also had decided to run for a second term as governor in 1899 and did not want to have a mismanaged state agency disrupting his bid for office.<sup>156</sup>

Andrew Wormser then had a "falling out" with Donald Bradford, a commissioner who was a former associate of Wormser's in the Dearborn Canal project. The disagreement arose over the cost of the printing of bonds that would be issued by the Holland Irrigation Company. Andrew Wormser wanted a New York firm to publish some rather ornate copies, while Bradford insisted on a less costly copy. Once the disagreement over the publication of bonds was cleared up and Andrew had the bonds printed, no one showed up to purchase them. The ALGC then told Andrew to come up with the money for project, plus the cost for the printing of the bonds.<sup>157</sup>

Having difficulty with the commission and with raising money, Andrew Wormser turned to the Montana Legislature to guarantee the bonds for his project. Andrew had two bills

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<sup>156</sup> Heathcote, "The Montana Arid Land Grant Commission 1895-1903," 6.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 6.

introduced into the Legislature by a state senator, but these bills stalled in committee when newly elected Governor Toole made it clear to the legislators that he would veto any bill that would guarantee ALGC bonds.<sup>158</sup>

With financial problems accumulating, the ALGC required the Holland Irrigation Company to supply a surety bond of \$50,000, and a cash deposit of \$25,000. The cash deposit was to be made out to the ALGC's secretary D.A. Cory, another associate of Andrew's from the Dearborn Canal project. Wormser traveled to New York and secured the money for the ALGC from a wealthy friend in the east. Later when the State Examiner's Office investigated the disbanded ALGC's books, Andrew's deposit had vanished along with other money received by the ALGC during the commission's existence.<sup>159</sup>

To top off the litany of problems, the ALGC also discovered in 1899 that the contract between the Holland Irrigation Company, the State of Montana, and the U.S. Government was not executed properly. The ALGC told Andrew Wormser that he had to start the application process for land under the Carey Land Act all over again. Wormser at this point told the commission he had entered into an additional agreement with the Northern Pacific for 6,000 acres to come under the canal. The ALGC in turn told Wormser that since he added acreage to his project, he nullified the existing survey and the ALGC would require a new survey of the Holland

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 6.

Irrigation Company's project.<sup>160</sup>

Five years after its inception, Andrew Wormser's development project was beginning to show strain. Neither Andrew Wormser nor the Holland Irrigation Company had realized a profit for the original investors. In addition, the settlers whom Andrew had attracted were beginning to weary of the uncompleted project.

All the time during which Wormser was trying to secure a contract from the government, the colonists were extending the irrigation system as "in kind" payment for their debts incurred with the Holland Irrigation Company. The weather at the turn of the century also turned unusually dry for Montana, and Wormser demanded money for irrigation water. Caught in a never ending cycle, the settlers who didn't have the cash accumulated more debt insuring Wormser of another season of indentured labor on the ever lengthening canal.<sup>161</sup>

As did most settlers on the frontier, the Dutch colonists lived in uncomfortable surroundings. Newcomers to Wormser City at first lived in a multiple dwelling that only had blankets separating families. In comparison to the Dutch settlers living in what they dubbed "Castle Gardens," Andrew and Anna Wormser had a large house and out building built by an architect from Butte, and employed male and female servants. Andrew aggravated the situation further when he visited the settlers in a large black coach with his family's

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>161</sup> Pioneer Memories Vol. 1, 284.

crest on the side, and hired their children to bath and perfume his dogs. Small wonder when Andrew Wormser addressed a community gathering standing in his carriage that one of the settlers started to throw rocks at him.<sup>162</sup>

In 1903, after the ALGC was restructured by the legislature into the Carey Land Grant Board, Andrew reappeared and asked for an option to restart his project. The Carey Land Board turned him down and destroyed the Holland Irrigation Company's bonds three years later. Wormser was left with a chartered company, deeded land, mounting debt, and hostile settlers. The settlers started to drift away to Big Timber and other settlements throughout the Pacific Northwest. Andrew Wormser's dreams began to dry up along with the unused land surrounding Wormser City.<sup>163</sup>

After a succession of civil cases beginning 1899 and running for 7 years, Andrew and Anna left Wormser City never to return again. In 1913, the final judgment against Andrew and Anna was complete leaving a balance of \$565.98 due to the final creditor. It is not known if this balance was ever paid off.<sup>164</sup>

Andrew Wormser's imprint remains on the community landscape of Big Timber, Montana. A review of the local telephone directory will reveal approximately 45 family names

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<sup>162</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 405; Pioneer Memories Vol. I, 283-84; Big Timber Pioneer, 2 January 1964.

<sup>163</sup> Heathcote, "Montana Arid Land Commission 1895-1903," 8; Pioneer Memories Vol. 2, (Big Timber, MT: Pioneer Publishing Co., 1981), 205; Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 408; VanHinte, Netherlanders in America, 697.

<sup>164</sup> Judgment Docket, no. 1, pages 432-440, Sweet Grass County Clerk of Court.

of Dutch extract. Big Timber boasts a Scandinavian heritage, but Arneson, Hanson, Solberg, and Volberg must share space with Droge, Dykstra, Vandervoort, and Westervelt. A large family of Plaggemeyers, descended from Bert Plaggemeyer, an original Wormser City homesteader, still remain in the community. The Plaggemeyers declare with pride that they persevered while others left the area.<sup>165</sup>

The descendants of Klas Scholten, a former postmaster and storekeeper in Wormser City, also remain. An elected county official is married to a Scholten and can be found in the courthouse at the Clerk and Recorder's office. One of the town's librarians is a Kamps, her husband is a Westervelt who was a "ditch rider" north of Big Timber before he retired. Traveling north out of Big Timber on U.S. 191, a sign advertises the "Vander Haagen Angus Ranch." The Big Timber High School 1995 football team was quarterbacked by a Van Daveer. Perhaps the most interesting sobriquet that remains is an establishment called "The Flying Dutchman." Whether the title refers to an infamous phantom ship or the former land developer, its legacy remains part of accepted community mythology.

Andrew Wormser's Holland Irrigation Company created the most enduring physical reminders in the county. When Andrew Wormser left the area in 1906, he left behind a nearly completed irrigation project that today still irrigates over 3,000 acres, with a potential to include 4,000 more. With

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<sup>165</sup> Pioneer Memories Vol. 2, 205.

Andrew's departure, the Glass Brothers of Helena took over the system for the Carey Land Board. The system that they found included a main canal eleven miles in length, a lateral canal three miles in length, and numerous branches that still deliver water today. The Glass Brothers' second Carey Land project extended Wormser's scheme to include Sweet Grass Creek, and excavated holding reservoirs to store water for dry years. One of the reservoirs was called Lake Walvoord, a namesake of D.J. Walvoord, a signee of the Holland Irrigation Company's Articles of Incorporation.<sup>166</sup>

Perhaps the most lasting patrimony of Andrew Wormser's scheme is the battle that still wages in the court system over water rights in the Big Timber drainage. Andrew claimed an unrealistic water right in excess of 50,000 miner's inches from Big Timber Creek. Even in wet years, the locals and experts claim the creek, at maximum, will flow only half that amount; a more realistic figure is around 13,000 miner's inches.<sup>167</sup>

In 1911, a protracted water adjudication took place in Sweet Grass County court house over claims on the water from Big Timber Creek and its tributaries. The case concluded by sorting out ninety-nine separate water rights that take their precedence from claims that ran between 1880 and 1907. The latest case was filed in 1994 filed by Larson Red Angus Ranch, which is located on property of the former Holland

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<sup>166</sup> Pioneer Memories Vol. 1, 122; Pioneer Memories Vol. 2, 27-31.

<sup>167</sup> Water Resource Survey, 20, 38-46.

Irrigation Company. The Sweet Grass County Clerk of Court calls this stream the most "litigious creek" in Montana. She emphasizes that fact by not allowing her marked up, dog-eared copy of the Water Resource Survey, 1950 out of her office.

Wormser City has all but disappeared from the maps and landscape. Scattered fragments at the site and various maps in archives still remind the researcher of its existence. One long time resident of the area, a descendant of the Plaggemeyer family, has searched the area repeatedly for bits of history with a metal detector, only to come up with a few memories.

The church that Andrew Wormser built was closed a short time after he left and the remnants of the congregation reopened a new church in Big Timber. The building that once held the church was renovated as a school house and stood until 1960. Today, only a corner of that building remains with the front steps leading into the grass where Wormser City once stood. A county school district map located on the wall of the Sweet Grass County Courthouse, includes a note about the Wormser school that rings like an epitaph for the former community, "abandoned."

When Andrew Wormser departed in 1906, he left behind a magnificent set of buildings that were his home for a short period of time. The house and barn were located two miles south of Wormser City, on a picturesque bend of Big Timber Creek. The buildings were designed in 1898 by H.M. Patterson, an architect from Butte who built some of the

finest homes of that city. At a cost of \$12,000, the house was replete with native stone, imported lumber and leaded glass. The building was a two-story structure with a wrap around porch that opened to a covered carriage port which allowed visitors to disembark dry in any type of weather. The massive steps led into an elegant home that had bay windows, a Victorian turret, and a upper-story sitting porch. To the rear of the home was the large barn that outwardly resembled a church. The building had large doors to allow Andrew Wormser's prized carriage to be kept inside. The building also provided servant quarters for Wormser's hired men and servants.<sup>168</sup>

After Andrew and Anna Wormser left Wormser City, the furnishings and interior and exterior parts of the home were sold or carried away by the local residents. The house was later sold as part of the legal proceedings that surrounded the greater civil suit that involved Wormser and his associates of the Holland Irrigation Company. The house's taxes were too burdensome and it was again sold, dismantled, and moved to a ranch near Melville. A fire was reported at the house site after it was removed and local residents told the authorities that lightning struck the remains of the building. The residents of Big Timber today can identify local residents who still own pieces from the house, and the front door can be found on a community building call the "Dug

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<sup>168</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 408; also an article from Big Timber Pioneer, ca 1917, vertical file, Sweet Grass County Museum.

Out."<sup>169</sup>

The barn, or "Carriage House" as it is called today, has taken on its own life. For years it remained in disrepair. Local teenagers used it as a hang out, and it was said to be "haunted at full moon." One mother tells a story of how her son participated in a prank as a headless horseman one evening, and scared party goers who gathered at the barn.<sup>170</sup> Recently a couple moved into the barn and renovated it beautifully into a Victorian home. The barn today once again reflects Andrew Wormser's grandiose dream, and allows a glimpse of a building that was built to complement a country estate. Reality, however, is a short walk away from the remodeled barn where bushes have grown over the cold stones of the crumbled foundation of Andrew's development scheme.

Myths about Andrew Wormser, like the decaying structures of Wormser City, are scattered about the landscape. One story has Andrew Wormser taking Anna to the top of Castle Rock, located just east of his Victorian buildings. Once at the summit, Andrew instructed Anna "to look around, as far as you can see, the land is mine."<sup>171</sup> Fact or fiction, the stories allow a journey back into a time where people who once lived and dreamed, and continue to do the same today in the shadow of Andrew Wormser's Castle Rock.

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<sup>169</sup> Judith Gap County Paper, 5 October 1936; Big Timber Pioneer, 2 January 1964.

<sup>170</sup> G. Westervelt, Unrecorded interview with author, 3 July 1995.

<sup>171</sup> D. Larson, Unrecorded interview with author, 6 October 1993.

## CHAPTER 6

## WENATCHEE, A QUIET REST

The old timers at Manhattan attribute the successful season this year at the Manhattan farm to the old German legend, "the Lord never forsakes a Dutchman." Probably they are right.

-The Avant Courier<sup>171</sup>

Andrew and Anna Wormser moved to Wenatchee, Washington in 1908. While Anna was new to central Washington, Andrew was already familiar with the region. As a member of the National Irrigation Congress Andrew was introduced to the area's potential for development and its newly completed completed irrigation project.<sup>172</sup> Wenatchee was fast becoming one of Washington's chief "apple valleys," following in the footsteps of the Yakima, Washington. Wenatchee provided Andrew and other developers with three components necessary for a successful land development business: cheap land, an abundance of water, and available capital.

While Andrew was busy establishing Dutch communities in Montana in 1892, the Wenatchee Development Company was busy laying the ground work for the city of Wenatchee. The

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<sup>171</sup> Avant Courier, 23 September 1892.

<sup>172</sup> "Andrew Wormser," Progressive Men of Montana, 501.

centerpiece of the the company's new city was the Great Northern Plat located along the banks of the Columbia River. The Great Northern Plat, with its radiating streets converging on the proposed depot grounds, successfully attracted the Great Northern Railroad as it advanced west across the state of Washington.

Five years later in 1903, the Wenatchee Development Company complemented the arrival of the railroad with the completion of a large irrigation canal. Delivering water to the rich soils that paralleled the Wenatchee and Columbia Rivers, the Highline Canal became the single most important development for Wenatchee valley. The Wenatchee Development Company only needed to attract settlers and farm labors to supplement the new transportation and irrigation services. Andrew Wormser, with his experience as a locator and developer, was a welcome addition to a city which today is known as the capital of one of the world's largest producers of apples.

Andrew and Anna Wormser arrived in Wenatchee three years after the the Highline Canal was put into service. With a history of irrigation development behind him, Andrew set out contacting potential Dutch settlers for the land surrounding the confluence of the Wenatchee and Columbia Rivers. Andrew was aided by overcrowding of Dutch settlements in the Midwest, and a severe drought oppressing Dutch immigrant farmers in Montana and the Dakotas.<sup>173</sup> Between 1908 and 1914,

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<sup>173</sup> DeJong, The Dutch in America, 162.

Andrew made significant attempts at attracting Dutch settlers to central Washington.<sup>174</sup> As a result, a substantial number of people living in the Wenatchee area today have a Dutch heritage.

In his waning years in Wenatchee, Andrew Wormser's immigrant locating was actually a supplement to his other financial and investment activities. Andrew established a lending business on the southwest corner of Mission and Palouse Streets that funneled Dutch capital from the Netherlands and the East Coast into the economy of central Washington. Located in the heart of Wenatchee's financial district, Andrew's business was just two blocks north of the Great Northern Depot and directly across from the Wenatchee Hotel. Two North Palouse secured for Andrew a visibility to new arrivals and provided a high profile for him in the community.<sup>175</sup>

Dutch financial interests in the Netherlands and the East Coast had been interested in the Pacific Northwest and the Intermountain area before Andrew Wormser's arrival. However, linkmen like Andrew channeled Dutch money to settlers and growing businesses in the region. In 1880, H.A. VanValkenberg led the way for Dutch financial investment by establishing the Netherlands American Mortgage Company (Netherlandsch-American Hypotheek Bank) in Seattle, Washington. Interest charged lenders in Washington and the

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<sup>174</sup> Wenatchee Daily World, 26 December 1914.

<sup>175</sup> R. L. Polk & Co. Chelan, Douglas, Grant, and Okanogan Counties Directory vol. 1914-15 (R. L. Seattle, WA: Polk & Co., 1914), 192.

West amounted to one percent a month, exceeding returns in the Netherlands that only totaled three and one half percent a year. Unfortunately for VanValkenberg, a nationwide depression during the 1890s bankrupted his business. As the national economy recovered in 1901, the Dutch again invested in the Intermountain region through the North Pacific Loan and Trust Company under the direction of G.O. VanDyk. By 1911 twenty "banks" managed a Dutch capital investment in the U.S that amounted to \$50,000,000. Ten of these organizations were located in the Intermountain region: five in Spokane and three in Seattle, Washington; one in Portland, Oregon; and one in Bozeman, Montana. Having played a large part in encouraging settlement, the lending organizations were not directly responsible for bringing Dutch settlers to the Intermountain region. The task of locating was left up to men like Andrew Wormser.<sup>176</sup>

Andrew Wormser's personal investment activity in Washington remains in part hidden. It is known that by his death, Andrew had branched out into mining. A total of \$45,000 was invested in Index, a mining area 60 miles northwest of Seattle.<sup>177</sup> Andrew and Anna also lived in a comfortable home that overlooked the Columbia River at the corner of Stevens and Monitor, on the southern outskirts of Wenatchee.

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<sup>176</sup> Lucas, Netherlanders in America, 414-415; VanHinte, Netherlanders in America, 686-87.

<sup>177</sup> Wenatchee Daily World, 26 December 1914; Spokesman Review, 27 December 1914.

Anna Wormser was apparently in ill health for most of the time she and Andrew lived in Wenatchee. On Christmas Day in 1911, at the age of 59, Anna died suddenly of heart failure while taking her evening bath.<sup>178</sup> Andrew purchased a plot in a private cemetery located on the northwest edge of Wenatchee. Anna's grave was marked by a simple stone etched with "Anna J. Wormser."

After Anna's death, Andrew Wormser changed his lifestyle and business activities. Andrew continued his lending, but supplemented that business with a bookstore. Andrew also moved into a large brick home at 245 North Mission, owned by Joshua and Fred Hobson local brick manufacturers. Only two blocks north of his business, Andrew remained with the Hobson family until 1914.<sup>179</sup>

On the third anniversary of Anna's death in 1914, Andrew Wormser died unexpectedly in his upstairs room. The Hobson family had heard him pacing about his room throughout the night. Concerned about his welfare, Joshua Hobson entered his room at 4:00 a.m. and found Andrew kneeling beside his bed dead.<sup>180</sup>

With no living relatives in Wenatchee, authorities were only able to confirm Andrew's identity by a letter addressed to an attorney in Bozeman that he carried in his pocket. Andrew's body was delivered to a local undertaker, his

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<sup>178</sup> Wenatchee Daily World, 26 December 1911.

<sup>179</sup> Polk & Co., 145.

<sup>180</sup> Wenatchee Daily World, 26 December 1914; The coroner's report said he died of "fattie degeneration of the heart."

attorney was notified, but no one claimed Andrew Wormser's body.<sup>181</sup>

Since no one claimed Andrew's body, Templeton Undertaking requested a double burial in Anna's grave. However, the cemetery owners would not allow two "bodies" in one grave, so Templeton cremated Andrew's body and with the permission of the cemetery caretakers, buried his remains unmarked at the feet of Anna.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> A fire destroyed Templeton Undertaking building and all its records in 1929, complicating any notification of relatives. Lisa Cohatzer, Unrecorded conversation with author, 22 August 1995.

<sup>182</sup> The location of Andrew's grave was forgotten and remained hidden until county officials were requested to search original cemetery records, Rich Carroll, Unrecorded conversation with author, 23 August 1995.

## CONCLUSION

## REQUIEM TO A WESTERN LOCATOR

We all worked hard but seemed to make  
little impression.

-S.E. Wishard<sup>183</sup>

Andrew Wormser, frontier entrepreneur, was the father of the Dutch communities in southwestern Montana. Demonstrating many of the attributes exemplified by Dutch immigrant leaders of the day, Andrew promoted immigrant settlement of the Intermountain area and contributed to the establishment of Dutch communities throughout the West.

During his stay in the West, Andrew transformed himself from an idealistic missionary into a pioneer real estate developer. Andrew attempted to create a personal fortune and empire, built on illusions of grandeur and a heritage of conservative Calvinism. For a brief time, Andrew achieved fame and success from his development schemes, and was able to enjoy the comforts and privileges of the the economic elite. Long term success, however, eluded him because he disregarded the economic and environmental realities of Montana's frontier.

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<sup>183</sup> The Light of the Valley, May 1894.

Andrew Wormser's career in the Intermountain West embodied three familiar frontier types, the land developer, the linkman, and the locator. Even though Andrew had experienced success with each venture, he left few "monuments" to his career after his death. It was the intent of this paper to trace the imprint of Andrew Wormser's activities, and to examine his importance to immigrant settlement in Montana and the Intermountain West.

Andrew Wormser's career as an independent land developer experienced brief success. Andrew had mistakenly based his land development scheme in central Sweet Grass County on his earlier success with immigrant settlement in the Gallatin Valley. However, Andrew was not involved in the day to day land development activity of the West Gallatin Irrigation Company, and he owned only one city block in the town of Manhattan.<sup>184</sup> Andrew's success in the Gallatin Valley was not based on his managerial skills, but on his ability to persuade and attract immigrants to Henry Altenbrand's Manhattan Malting Company's holdings.

Andrew Wormser's career as a western linkman, or a purveyor of information and knowledge in the West, was also successful only to a degree. Andrew's family background initially prepared him for this craft, and his formal training as a minister sharpened his ability to persuade and induce the imagination of his listeners. Even today, descendants of the early Dutch immigrants in the Amsterdam

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<sup>184</sup> Rob Kroes, Nederlandse Pioneers in Het Amerikaan Wester, (De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1989), 81.

and Churchill area recall Andrew's activity as a minister with a great deal of respect.<sup>185</sup> However, Andrew nullified much of his earned goodwill in the Big Timber area when he set himself up as a patroon, or lord of the manor, while exploiting the settlers he had lured there.<sup>186</sup>

As a land developer and linkman associated with the Manhattan Malting Company, Andrew had only to guide willing settlers to the fertile land and work with others to secure the financial and physical infrastructure of the Gallatin Valley. He put himself in no financial risk. In Sweet Grass County, however, Andrew not only had to provide a link between the available land and eager immigrant farmers, he had to expend a great deal of energy securing adequate finances for his land development schemes and satisfying the requirements of an uncooperative state agency. Even though Andrew was able to acquire land, attract settlers, and secure funding for Wormser City, he was not able to control the uncooperative climate and geography to insure the success of his development plan.

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<sup>185</sup> Pete Kimm, Unrecorded interview with author, 20 December 1995; Dick C. Flikkema, Unrecorded interview with author, 17 January 1996.

<sup>186</sup> The "patroon system," established 1629 for the West Indies Company, was an attempt by the government of the Netherlands to increase Dutch immigration and settlement of North America. A vestige of feudalism, the patroon system was an elaborate framework of immigrant settlement that allowed the entrepreneur, or patroon, to act as an agent for immigration. Settlers attracted to the patroon's land in North America, would in turn pay him a fixed rent and a share of profits made from their labor. Granted virtual control over certain civil and judicial rights of settlement, the patroon almost completely owned the settler body and soul. The patroon system often allowed entrepreneurs left out of the Dutch aristocracy an opportunity to become New World aristocrats. See Arnold Mulder, Americans from Holland, 43-48; Gerald DeJong, The Dutch in America, 15-18.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, locators were used by land developers to capture the "imagination" of immigrants, and settle the American Western frontier. To succeed, the locator had to create and nourish an image of frontier settlement that was dependent on his ability to manage all of the challenging components of a diverse Western landscape. Locators and immigrants, however, often had to redefine material success because the human and physical elements of the frontier could not be brought under control.<sup>187</sup>

In evaluating Andrew Wormser's life, we must look beyond his failed dream of empire to assess his lasting imprint on the human and physical geography of the Intermountain West. As an immigrant locator, Andrew introduced Dutch settlers and culture to an area that stretched from the rolling prairies of south central Montana, to the palouse hills of central Washington. The descendants of those Dutch immigrants continue to shape the human and physical landscape of the Intermountain area. While Dutch culture is most sharply defined in the communities of Amsterdam and Churchill through two Christian Reformed Churches, a private school, a Dutch festival and a large number of descendants of immigrant settlers, the imprint of Dutch settlement and heritage remains unmistakable in the communities of Big Timber and

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<sup>187</sup> Paula M. Nelson, After the West was Won: Homesteaders and Town-Builders in Western South Dakota, 1900-1917, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986), xvi.

Wenatchee, as well.<sup>188</sup>

Andrew Wormser's life did appear to have a tragic end in Wenatchee. His obscure death does not seem to fit a man who shaped a large portion of Dutch-American history in the Intermountain West. However, undertakers in Wenatchee unknowingly granted Andrew his final wish. While traveling in Europe some thirty years before, Andrew was unimpressed with the massive gravestones in Scottish cemeteries. In Verspreide Geschriften, Hier een Weinig, Daar een Weinig, Andrew foreshadowed his burial when he wrote about the forgotten, decaying monuments,

Mij dunkt, als ik zelf keizen moest, ik zou begeeren to rusten in den hof, te midden van moeder natuur met soo wenig mogelijk van den killen, louden steen rondom mij. [If I could choose my end, I would covet a natural resting place without a cold stone to commemorate me.]<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Great Falls Tribune, 2 September 1962; Bozeman Daily Chronicle, 29 March 1992; Historic Memories of Sweetgrass County, Montana, (np, nd.), 30.

<sup>189</sup> Wormser, Verspreide Geschriften, 40.

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