When Dutch Immigrants began arriving in the US during the second half of the 19th century, many carried with them a commitment to Reformed Christian Day Schools. It was especially the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) that cradled these schools. Records for these schools are found in early CRC yearbooks and in the yearly directories of their umbrella organization, Christian Schools International (CSI). This project was to produce maps from these records of the changing geography of these schools and their attributes. This is part of an ongoing project to prepare an Atlas of Dutch American history and culture.

Data Collection

The work started with scanning to OCR the yearly summary tables of data for these schools (late 19th century to the present) and then adding coordinates to selected databases (at five year intervals) so that GIS mapping software could be used.

Mapping

In the late nineteenth century there were only a few schools located in the west Michigan area and within the city of Chicago. From there schools opened and closed all across the map. Today there are hundreds of schools spread across the continent.

Acknowledgement and References

Figure 2: Part of a database scanned by students at Hope College, then enhanced for use with GIS. The databases contain entries for every Reformed Christian Day School belonging to Christian Schools International.

Figure 3: New, Existing and Closed Reformed Christian Day Schools, 1885. This map shows the first recorded schools.

Enrollment in Reformed Christian Day Schools in North America steadily expanded during the twentieth century, especially in concentrations of Dutch American population (see figure 6). After the 1990s growth began to flatten and drop off. In the 1960s, non Dutch American enrollment began to increase and more schools were founded outside of Dutch American population centers.

Figure 4: New, Existing and Closed Reformed Christian Day Schools, 1985-1990.

Along with the schools’ location and years of operation, enrollment data was also graphed and mapped by individual school, county, region, and country.

Figure 5: Enrollment in Reformed Christian Day Schools in 1995.

Figure 6: Enrollment in Reformed Christian Day Schools by Region in North America.

Figure 7: Location of Reformed Christian Day Schools and Dutch American Populations by County.

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