

# *The Dutch in New Netherland*

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REACHING the top of the World Trade Center one evening four years ago was an experience we will not soon forget. It was a few days after the publication of our book *A Sweet and Alien Land*, the story of Dutch New York, New Amsterdam. But from the restaurant's windows up on the 110th floor, it was almost impossible to see that little corner of Manhattan that had preoccupied us, as authors, for so long. Stretching away to the horizon we could see a vast modern city; but what had once been New Amsterdam itself was now almost hidden away at the foot of this towering symbol of modern New York.

When we walked for the first time through Lower Manhattan, three years earlier, the Dutch past had seemed closer. It was Labor Day, and the streets were deserted—just like any Dutch town on a Sunday. The old warehouses, decrepit and neglected, that still stood between newer skyscrapers might have been in Leiden or Delft, although they were built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, long after New Amsterdam became New York.

But what was even more striking was the fact that the streets still ran according to the old plan laid out by Master Kryn Fredericks, the engineer from Amsterdam who arrived in Manhattan in 1625. He was sent by the newly formed West India Company, which had received a charter for this first Dutch settlement in the New World and was now anxious to protect its province, a promising source of the precious beaver furs.

A fort was, understandably, the first priority and Fredericks brought with him a grandiose design. Starting an American tradition perhaps, it was to be a pentagon in shape; its circumference would measure more than 1,000 feet and the moat surrounding it would be eight feet deep. In the middle of the fort enclosure, there was to be a marketplace; around it, houses for the Council and the town notables, as well as a schoolhouse, church, and hospital all under one roof; and there were plans for a small town outside the fort.

The project was never fully carried out, and the fort was never the size Fredericks had intended. But the street names in Lower Man-

hattan today show that at least the outline of his town planning survived: Pearl Street was once Paerelstraat; Water Street is Waterstraat anglicized; and Beaver Street is English for Beverstraat, named after the small Dutch colony's most important source of income.

It is fascinating to stroll around that little patch of New York City today. On the corner of Stone Street and Bridge Street once stood the first stone houses to be built in New Amsterdam; and Stone Street itself was the first in New Amsterdam to be cobbled in true Dutch style.

Broad Street, unusually wide for this part of town, was once New Amsterdam's first canal, the Heerengracht: and just like the canals in old Amsterdam, it was so extensively used as the city's sewer that in 1662 a lock was built to keep it artificially filled with water, so that, as the ordinance said, "the great and unbearable stench may be suppressed which arises daily when the water runs out."

The casual visitor will notice very little of the former Dutch presence in this corner of New York. He is probably unaware that the Customs House on Bowling Green was built where once Fort Amsterdam stood; that the Bowling Green itself was once het Marcktveld, the Market Field; and that on the corner of Whitehall Street and State Street once stood the splendid mansion of the last Dutch governor of New York, Peter Stuyvesant, which the first English governor, Sir Richard Nicolls, rechristened Whitehall.

In a recent interview with Jan van Wieringen of *De Volkskrant*, Professor Bert Salwen, an anthropologist at New York University, remarked that until the beginning of the 1970's—only ten years ago—it was generally believed that continuous building in New York had destroyed all trace of the Dutch occupation.

In recent years, however, historians and archaeologists have discovered that underneath modern New York much of New Amsterdam still survives. An old pair of shoes found in 1969 on a building site near Water Street aroused curiosity and the diggings by the Division for Historic Preservation of the state of New York that followed turned up a treasure trove of seventeenth-century pipes, wooden spoons, wine-glasses, bottles, and china.

Archaeology, unfortunately, is an expensive business for developers, who are in a hurry to get their buildings up. But the discoveries of 1969 marked the first of a new series of diggings, which have been greatly helped by the present economic slump. The most important dig so far was concluded only a year ago, when a team of archaeologists and students were able to work on the site of the Dollar Savings Bank on Water Street. They discovered the foundations of New York's first City Hall, a building that began its life more frivolously as New Amsterdam's official Town Tavern and was raised to the dignity of Stadt Huys when the town got its city charter in 1653.

The archaeologists who toiled on this site for eight months came up with an astonishing haul. Before the bulldozers moved in, no less than four tons of Dutch history was dug up. At the moment it is stored at New York University awaiting thorough examination, and it is hoped that the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission will produce a first report very soon.

But even before the archaeologists went to work in the soil of modern New York, it was possible to paint a vivid picture of the Dutch in New Amsterdam. The city with its capital port was never very big, but it welcomed a steady stream of visitors, many of whom wrote down eyewitness accounts of what they saw.

The diarist Nicolaes van Wassenaer was the first to take note of these accounts, in his *Historie van Europa*, and in 1626 he was able to write that Fort Amsterdam was already "very large." The Comptoir, the Counting House, he went on, was a stone building roofed with reed, while the other houses were made of bark. They were in fact dugouts, made in haste by the first settlers to arrive, before winter found them homeless; six or seven feet deep, their sides were cased in with wooden planks, the floor covered with thick bark, and the roof made of branches covered with more bark or with slices of turf.

By the time the West India Company started to build its fort, the colonists were beginning to emerge from their holes to build the earliest-proper houses, made of wood. We must, however, wait till the early 1640's for the next eyewitness account of the small settlement on Manhattan Island, then governed by the dictatorial and brutal Willem Kieft.

Rather surprisingly, the man who in 1643 visited the predominantly Protestant community was a French missionary, Father Isaac Jogues, who had been saved by the Dutch from torture at the hands of the Mohawk Indians. They helped him to escape from North New Netherland to Manhattan, and walking around it, Jogues observed the small lively port with keen interest. A place with the "arrogance of Babel" was his impression; it had no more than 400-500 inhabitants, yet, as Kieft told him, eighteen different languages were spoken there.

The primitive hamlet of the 1620's and 1630's had grown into a fair-sized village, dominated by the Counting House, built inside the fort. Although an English visitor described this four years later as "a castle of great use for keeping the natives at a distance," Jogues obviously had had a closer look and noticed that the four bastions were crumbling away and that the original moat had filled up with earth.

When Jogues left New Amsterdam a year later, inside the fort work had begun on the building of a church. Until that time, the New Amsterdamers had had to make do with a room over the horse mill of Francis Molemaecker. Later, a small chapel had been built,

near the East River, but this was no more than a "mean barn," as someone described it. And Governor Kieft decided—or rather was pushed into it—that it was high time New Amsterdam had a proper church.

The big problem was how to raise the money to pay for it. The West India Company felt it had spent enough on the colony and the settlers were still relatively poor. But with the cunning that was Kieft's most characteristic trait, he seized the perfect occasion to part the colonists from their savings—a wedding party, in this case for Sarah Jansz, stepdaughter of the pastor of the city, Dominie Bogardus. Kieft waited till the punch was flowing freely. Then he struck—"after the fourth or fifth round of drinking," as one of the guests later hazily recalled. His fund raising was startlingly successful—"all then with light heads subscribed largely, competing one with another."

How the wedding guests felt about their enforced generosity the following morning can be easily imagined. But nobody was allowed to get out of paying up, the same guest indignantly recorded. Kieft kept them all to their word.

Perhaps Kieft's enthusiasm for the building of this first church can be explained by guilt. Several years earlier, he had already finished building the Stads Herberg, or Town Tavern, a fine stone building where the many visitors to New Amsterdam could now be accommodated. Until it was finished, he told a visiting Dutchman, Captain David de Vries, "he suffered great annoyance" from the stream of visitors because he had to put them up and entertain them in his own house. The Town Tavern was a two-story building, outside the town facing the East River, and—as we now know for certain—standing where Pearl Street crosses Hanover Square.

The Town Tavern weathered some stormy years before it was given the prestigious new title of Stadt Huys, or City Hall. Its first host, Philip Gerritsen, lasted only three months before he died of a stab wound from one of his customers.

The incident was by no means unusual. In the rough pioneering society of New Amsterdam, brawls and fights were so common that Kieft and his successor, Peter Stuyvesant, were constantly increasing the fines for its disorderly citizens.

The Town Tavern was far from being the only inn in town. One report in 1648 stated that a quarter of the city buildings were grog shops. And the previous year Dominie Backerus, the new pastor who had arrived in Amsterdam with Peter Stuyvesant, wrote back disapprovingly to the Church Council in Amsterdam that he had counted seventeen public houses—enough to make the citizens "very much inclined to intoxication."

One of the most popular inns was het Houten Paerd, the Wooden

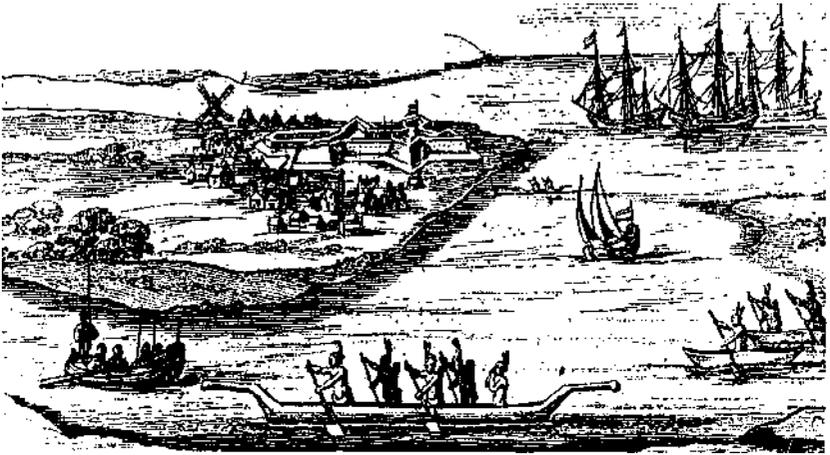
Horse, run by a lively Parisian, Philip Geraerdy. The inn's name was a tongue-in-cheek commemoration of his brief military career in the New World. This had been abruptly terminated by his being sentenced to "ride the wooden horse" a Standard punishment for soldiers who had been absent on leave without permission. Like other offenders, Geraerdy had been forced to sit for hours at a time on a crossbar with heavy weights hanging from his feet, a drawn sword in one hand—and a pitcher in the other.

But this brawling, vigorous, and in fact, for a pioneering city, normal life was already doomed by Kieft's folly. When he sailed for Europe in 1647, much of this once thriving town had gone up in smoke. The governor with his usual lack of judgment had declared war on the Indians, with disastrous consequences for the colonists, and New Amsterdam and its surroundings were now little more than "piles of ashes from burnt houses and barns." Stuyvesant arrived to find it no better than a slum, with cows and goats grazing on the ruined walls of the fort, streets like cow paths, and a few straggling buildings dotted about. The clean lines of Kryn Fredericks' ground plan were, as Stuyvesant reported to Holland, now blurred "by the disorderly manner hitherto and now daily being practiced in building and erecting houses."

He tackled the situation with great energy and thirteen years later New Amsterdam was once more demonstrably a town; in September 1660 a visiting ship's captain wrote enthusiastically to his employers in Amsterdam: "This place, the Manhattans, is quite rich of people and there are at present full over 350 houses so that it begins to be a brave place."

In that year the city surveyor counted precisely 342 houses, in which lived 1,500 citizens. Even the English were envious of this thriving and bustling port, strategically sited between the Hudson and the East River, "the whirlpool which the Dutch call the Hellgat." One of these Englishmen was a certain Samuel Maverick, who sang the praises of the Dutch capital in a report to London: "very delightful and convenient for situation, especially for trade . . . with an excellent harbour."

By that time, the days of pioneering and Kieft's Indian wars were a thing of the past. The New Amsterdammers now lived in a degree of luxury of which Stuyvesant's own family mansion, built in the mid-1650's on what is now the corner of Whitehall Street and State Street, was a fair example. He had spared no expense. The plot that Stuyvesant had confiscated from a rich English merchant, Thomas Baxter, after his defection from New Amsterdam during the most recent Anglo-Dutch war, had been leveled with 9,000 tons of sand. And eyewitness accounts teil of "an expensive and handsome building" made of stone,



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The Hartgers drawing of New Amsterdam-  
the earliest known view of the port of Manhattan  
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with a gabled façade, surrounded at back and sides by lawns and a formal Dutch flower and vegetable garden. Its front overlooked the market, while a flight of stairs went down to the river, where the governor's personal barge was moored.

Stuyvesant was never very rich, but the interior of his house was said to be opulent, full of solid Dutch furniture, silver, and china shipped over from Europe. And he was certainly not the only Dutchman who lived in such style in New Amsterdam. Next door was the house of Captain Nicholas Varleth, a wealthy shipowner, who had married Stuyvesant's sister Anna, and New Amsterdam counted in the last years of its existence as a Dutch city several inhabitants who nowadays could be called millionaires: men such as Cornelis Steenwyck, Oloff Steven van Cortland, and Pieter Couwenhoven, names still around in New York today.

As the recent diggings have demonstrated, they lived extremely well. "The Dutch seem to have had a taste for luxury," Dr. Nan Rothchild of New York University said recently. "We came across some particularly fine glass and china, for instance." Another discovery that impressed the archaeologists was that, unlike the English, the Dutch brought over their own livestock, cows and pigs included. According to our own researches, the first cattle arrived as early as 1625, when the West India Company sent over ships freighted with horses, cows, and hay. Later in the same year, they sent a fuyboat carrying sheep and hogs. The cattle were unloaded first at Governor's Island, and then shipped over to Manhattan, where twenty of them died. But the rest settled down happily in their new home, and no wonder: each one had its own attendant and separate stall during the long voyage.

The desire of the Dutch to go on enjoying their own traditional food suggests more than just good appetites. It was symptomatic of the general attitude of the settlers in New Netherland, who tried by every means to re-create the life style they had enjoyed in Europe. The United Provinces was one of the richest and most powerful nations in the world at this time, and the Dutch in general lived comfortably. It was a perennial problem for the big Dutch trading companies to find people ready to abandon their comfortable homeland for an unknown country peopled, as they saw it, by naked pagans. And those who were adventurous enough to give it a try had a single aim: to turn New Netherland into a Dutch province, and New Amsterdam into a Dutch town.

It goes without saying that when in 1657, under pressure from the city fathers of New Amsterdam, Governor Stuyvesant introduced the Burgher-recht, it was an instant success. More than 200 citizens immediately enrolled as so-called small burghers, a rank which for the

sum of 20 guilders was open to any man born in the city or who had lived there for at least a year and six weeks. The great Burgher-recht—for members of the government, magistracy, clergy, or officers—was less popular: it cost 50 guilders, and only twenty inhabitants at first claimed great burgher status, among them Stuyvesant himself.

The introduction of the burgher-right did not, of course, mean that from one day to the next New Amsterdam was transformed into a city of solidly respectable citizens, and nothing makes this clearer than the records of the court of New Amsterdam. Established by Stuyvesant, the court sat every Monday morning in the Stadt Huys, presided over by the burgomaster and the schepens, the aldermen. Its records reveal a bawdy, boisterous society in which rumor and gossip were rife. And the very first case that opened the court's first session, on February 10, 1653, was eloquent of New Amsterdam morals. It involved a certain Allard Anthony, a somewhat unpopular alderman, who was actually sitting as one of the judges. According to several witnesses, Anthony had had an affair with the wife of one Joost Goderis, a weigh-house employee. Half a dozen men taunted Goderis with his wife's infidelity, telling him that he ought to wear horns. The desperate man lashed out at one of his persecutors, who then stabbed him with a knife. The case trailed on for weeks, and the luckless Goderis—continually harassed by his highly public woes—grew more and more desperate; in the end he lost both his wife and his job.

This was certainly not the only case of adultery on record. In a port like New Amsterdam, there were plenty of bored housewives ready to oblige a passing sailor—although New Amsterdam was notorious for its prostitutes—and there were many unsavory court cases as a result. In one, a sailor was hauled before the court because he had been spotted in the bushes with the wife of Willem Beeckman, an important Company employee. Straight-faced, the sailor told the magistrates that he had received such a kiss from Mevrouw Beeckman "that I could scarcely compose myself." It was, according to gossip, the price for his silence, since he had surprised her with another man, the rich storekeeper Cornelis Steenwyck. One malicious woman told her neighbors that the sailor had been given money as well, and that he bitterly regretted that he had not taken the gold ring from Mevrouw Beeckman's finger into the bargain. The case was dismissed after the main witness retracted her story, pleading for "forgiveness if she had repeated one word to the injury of Mme Beeckman."

Another sailor, discovered in the bushes with another housewife, was let off since the woman in question was decidedly eccentric. As the New Amsterdamers related with relish, she had once been seen visiting a public house "clad in men's clothes, having a pair of whiskers painted black," and had ordered a pint of beer.

Most of the cases heard by the court had to do with property, but those concerned with impropriety in any form drew by far the biggest audiences. New Amsterdam had no playhouse and the court was the best substitute. A particularly sensational case involved the wife of one Hendrick Sluyter. After a fight with another woman she had, "in the presence of respectable company, with their wives, hoisted her petticoats up to her back and showed them her arse." Since this, according to the records, was an offense "not to be tolerated in a well-ordered province," she was shipped home to Holland, despite her ingenious plea that she had lifted her skirts at her husband, not at the bystanders.

Annetje Bogardus, widow of a minister, got off lightly by comparison. She was accused of exhibitionism, having displayed her ankle in public. A friend came to the rescue, testifying that Annetje, passing the blacksmith's shop, "placed her hand on one side, and drew up her petticoat a little so as not to soil it since the road was muddy." She was acquitted.

The sentences handed out in New Amsterdam were harsh by modern standards. Before Stuyvesant's time, executions were fairly common, but during his term of office, the court confined itself to flogging, scourging with rods, and banishment. Sometimes the punishment was completed by cutting off the right ear or branding on the cheeks. In one talked-about case, however, the court ordered a death sentence to be carried out on a Company Negro, Manuel Gerritsen. He was one of a group of nine who had confessed to the murder of another slave, and he was chosen by lot to be hanged as an example. It turned out that he was not nicknamed Manuel the Giant for nothing: the gallows on the Strand had not been built for his size and weight, and when the cord broke and he crashed to the ground, the bystanders asked for mercy, which, it was noted in the records, "was accordingly granted."

Prison life in New Amsterdam was certainly no picnic, but it was quite humane. The dark, damp prison in the fort was hardly ever used; instead, most of the prisoners were kept in cells under the Stadt Huys. And the laxness of security was demonstrated by one prisoner who, after getting his jailer drunk, disappeared up the chimney. Despite this, the jailers still received permission in 1658 "to lay in beer, wine and spirits for the prisoners, free of excise, likewise fire and light gratis." There was only one condition: that this should not lead to "any parties directly or indirectly."

In its attitude toward prisoners, as in its care of paupers and orphans—tolerant and humane—New Amsterdam reflected society as it then was in the Netherlands, hundreds of miles away on the other side of the Atlantic. Small wonder that the English in Massachusetts and Connecticut studied the thriving Dutch community with bewilder-

ment and envy, but to many of them, quite the most enviable feature of New Amsterdam was its broad-mindedness in matters of religion. This was certainly not the official policy of Stuyvesant. Together with the Protestant ministers, he devoted plenty of time and energy to combating the presence of dissenters such as the Lutherans and Quakers, and he strongly objected to the arrival of the first Jews. He received, however, very little support from the directors of the West India Company. As C. R. Boxer remarks, in his excellent book *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, the Heeren XIX were convinced that religious toleration would be as advantageous for New Netherland as it had been for Amsterdam.

They told him in numerous letters that he was not to be too strict with Protestant dissenters, since this might discourage immigration and induce people already living there to leave. They went so far as to give him the typically Dutch practical advice to connive at non-Calvinists celebrating their own forms of worship, providing that they were discreet about it and caused no annoyance to their orthodox neighbors.

Such an attitude was in strong contrast to that of New England, where women were still being charged with witchcraft—as was Judith Varleth, sister of Stuyvesant's brother-in-law Captain Varleth, in 1662. She was fortunate enough to be acquitted after Stuyvesant wrote urgently to John Winthrop, governor of Connecticut, protesting that she was innocent of such "a horrible crime," but many women were less lucky and ended their lives at the stake.

Witchcraft was far from being the only "irregularity of morals" on which the unbending Puritans pounced, as John Underhill discovered. This Englishman, who had learned the arts of war in the army of the Stadtholder Prince Frederick Hendrick and married a Dutch girl, arrived in 1630 in America. He visited New Netherland and liked it, but decided to settle in New England, a decision he regretted bitterly when in 1638 he was charged with adultery with a certain Mistress Wilbore, at whom he had been seen to gaze admiringly during a long lecture in a Boston church. Underhill lightheartedly admitted his crime, pleading that "he had not looked with lust at the said miss." When one of the judges asked him why he had not looked at the other ladies present, Underhill flippantly replied, "Verily they are not desirable women." What more proof of guilt could a Puritan court demand? Underhill was excommunicated, and when he asked by which law he was condemned, he was sternly assured that it would certainly be possible to devise a law "against this very sin."

Not long afterward, Underhill left for New Amsterdam, where he was to play a key role in Kieft's Indian wars. Many other Englishmen

followed him, to get away from oppressive Puritan New England and build a new life for themselves in the more liberal Dutch society.

It must be said, nevertheless, that although the Dutch attitude toward religious refugees from neighboring European communities was one of tolerant welcome, their behavior toward the Indians was much less admirable.

Initially, Dutch-Indian relations had been cordial. Bearing in mind the Company's instructions that the natives were to be treated both fairly and kindly, Peter Minuit, the first director-general or governor, paid in 1625 a fair price for Manhattan. This island had been discovered in 1609 by Henry Hudson, an Englishman employed by the Dutch East India Company, and for this piece of real estate the Indians were quite satisfied with goods to the value of 60 guilders. Among them were 10 dogs, 80 pairs of stockings, 10 guns, and one copper pan—in fact, as one historian later remarked: "it was the best buy in the world."

The Dutch, unlike the English, were also perfectly willing to learn from the Indians, for whom they felt neither dislike nor contempt. Minor clashes were, of course, inevitable, in particular after the Indians had been introduced to alcohol, previously unknown to them, and discovered they liked it.

Under the despicable government of Kieft the relationship, however, soured. Kieft—a "mean fellow" according to the Indians—decided that the Indians must pay taxes like the Dutch, and when they protested he forgot the Company principle " 'Tis better to rule by love and friendship than by force" and attempted to impose the taxation. The situation deteriorated rapidly, until the colony was a battlefield.

A horrified witness to one of the bloodiest episodes was Captain David de Vries, a humane Dutch businessman, who had traveled all over the world, but who, deeply shocked, wrote in his journal that he had never seen anything like the massacre of innocent Indians organized by Kieft in 1643. "Infants were snatched from their mothers' breasts and cut to pieces in sight of the parents, and the pieces thrown into the fire and into the water; other sucklings were bound to wooden boards and cut and stuck or bored through and miserably massacred, so that a heart of stone would have been softened. . . . Some came to our people on the farms with their hands cut off; others had their legs hacked off and some were holding their entrails in their arms."

Both Kieft and the colony were to pay dearly for such barbarism, and the relations between the "Swannekens" and the "Wilden" were never the same in spite of Stuyvesant's efforts to establish a new understanding with the savages. They remained restless and over the years



(TOP) The only known portrait of Peter Stuyvesant, probably by Hendrick Couturier, (active 1661-1674)  
(Copyright New York Historical Society, New York City)



(BOTTOM) Coat of arms of New Amsterdam, 1654  
(Copyright Museum of the City of New York)

murdered a total of fourteen settlers. But the governor forbade the Dutch to retaliate. It was in vain, and when in 1655 he had to leave New Amsterdam for some weeks, the simmering hostility on both sides suddenly came to the boil. Hundreds of Indians in canoes, on their way south to wage war on another tribe living on Long Island, landed on Manhattan in search of food. It was the moment the resentful settlers had waited for, and when an Indian woman broke into an orchard to pick a peach, she was shot dead by its owner. Another bloody war broke out.

By the time Stuyvesant had hurried back to restore order, over 300 Dutchmen had been killed and 100 carried off prisoner. It was years before he was able to rebuild the colonists' confidence in their future.

There were other Dutch-Indian clashes, but further from New Amsterdam another serious—and, as it turned out, fatal—threat to the colony demanded more urgently the attention of Stuyvesant and his people.

From the very beginning, the English had always refused to recognize the existence of the small Dutch settlement. James I and his son Charles I had frequently protested against the intrusion of the Dutch on what they considered their property, on the strength of some beautiful pieces of parchment. And the New Englanders had never hesitated to encroach on the boundaries of New Netherland and help themselves to whatever they wanted. The West India Company, under constant pressure from their governors in the New World, had from time to time made tentative efforts to establish their rights. But they received little official support from the Dutch government—and no satisfaction at all in London.

When Stuyvesant arrived in New Netherland in 1647, he had found a colony that had shrunk to a shadow of its former self. Initially, it had stretched from the Delaware River in the south to Cape Cod in the north. Now it was little more than the island of Manhattan; parts of Long Island; one outpost on the Connecticut River and another on the Delaware; and Fort Orange in the north, now Albany. Stuyvesant, urged by the Company, did everything he could to corae to an agreement with New England, knowing all too well that the few Dutch settlers were no match for their already numerous English neighbors. Three years after his arrival, he even traveled to the capital of Connecticut, Hartford—built on what officially was still Company property—in an effort to settle the border question, but although he formally ceded large areas of the province to them, they had no intention of sticking to their side of the bargain.

Over the years they pushed forward relentlessly into Dutch territory, and when Charles II returned in triumph to London in 1660, he gave

away various parts of New Netherland with a generous hand to those who had remained faithful to him during his years in exile. One of the most important beneficiaries was his brother James, Duke of York, who in 1664 received a charter that conferred on him all the territory of New Netherland, New Haven, and much of Connecticut.

The fact that his new fief was still in Dutch hands was a slight disadvantage, but easily remedied, and in May 1664 a small expeditionary force left Portsmouth under the command of Colonel Richard Nicolls. Their departure was reported to The Hague, where Raadspensionary Johan de Witt protested to the despised English ambassador Downing. "I know of no such country, but only in the mapps" was Downing's indifferent reply. The Dutch ambassador in London, meanwhile, equally protesting, had to be content with a bland assurance from Charles II that he had "no desire to damage the understanding he had with the Dutch."

That de Witt went so far as to make an official protest was in itself a new development. Certainly, he was not moved by love for the West India Company, whom he rightly considered both inept and impotent. But he was now very much concerned for the colony itself. After years of indifference, the persistent interest of the English in this prime site on the Hudson had made it clear to the Dutch government at The Hague that they had a priceless possession in the New World. Not only had the colony great potential in its own right; it was also excellently situated for the contravention of the dreaded new Navigation Acts by which England was slowly but surely sapping Dutch commercial supremacy. And de Witt now began drawing up plans for a drastic reorganization of the Company, with emphasis on New Netherland, which would at last give the colony almost complete autonomy.

These plans were warmly welcomed by Stuyvesant, who from being the Company's loyal servant had slowly changed, over the years, into a dedicated New Netherlander who chafed at the leading reins in which the Heeren XIX kept him and the settlers. He had begun to love the country he governed, and he had every intention of staying there and keeping it Dutch. When Nicolls' fleet was sighted in the Hudson, he already knew of the English intentions and began at once to prepare the defense of New Amsterdam. It was an impossible task. Nobody in New Amsterdam was prepared to sacrifice his life for the sake of the Company that had neglected the colony for years, and the crumbling fort itself had only twenty-four rusting pieces of artillery, most of them useless.

The nearest New Amsterdam came to putting up a fight was a moving but useless gesture made by Stuyvesant himself on the last day of the brief siege. As two of the ships closed in on the city, the one-

legged governor limped hurriedly up to the wall of the fort, where a gunner stood ready with a lighted match. The appalled citizens stared up at him while he paused before giving the order to fire. Suddenly two of their number, Dominie Megapolensis and his son Samuel, went up to him, and taking him gently by the arms, led him away.

It was the end of New Netherland. On the following day—Monday, September 8, 1664—the Act of Capitulation was signed in Stuyvesant's "Bouwerij." And fifty-five years after Henry Hudson discovered Manhattan for the Dutch, thirty-nine years after Peter Minuit bought the island from the Indians, and eleven years after New Amsterdam received its city charter, Stuyvesant put his signature to the papers that surrendered New Netherland to the English. A few days later, the burgomasters reported the fact to the West India Company with the final words of reproach: "Meanwhile since we have no longer to depend on your Honors' promises of protection, we with all the poor, sorrowing and abandoned Commonalty here must fly for refuge to the Almighty God. . . ."

The peace terms agreed at the end of the second Anglo-Dutch war, in 1667, settled the fate of New Netherland. Together with other "places, cities and forts which during the war had been taken" it passed into British hands, to remain there—with a brief interruption in 1673—until American Independence in 1776.

But Dutch influence lingered on in New York long after the end of British rule. The Dutch language was common in New York right up to the end of the nineteenth century, and dozens of Dutch names still testify to a Dutch past, while the famous Holland Society refuses to accept as members those who cannot claim direct descent from Dutchmen who came to America before 1672. Architecturally, too, Dutch influence was strong, and for years houses continued to be built with a high stoop as in old Amsterdam—although the danger of flooding in New York was nonexistent. The latest diggings also tell us that the Dutch continued to import their own glass and china until well into the eighteenth century.

There is little visible trace of this Dutch influence today, apart from the four tons of archaeological finds, a handful of Dutch names for streets and neighborhoods—Brooklyn, Harlem, the Bowery, Flushing—a few mansions in the Hudson Valley built in the Dutch style, and the tomb of Peter Stuyvesant in the somewhat dilapidated church of St. Mark's in the Bowery, built on the site of Stuyvesant's onetime garden chapel.

But material souvenirs are not always the most lasting. And the spirit of the old Dutch city has perhaps turned out to be even more durable than its Delft. New Amsterdam was an anarchic, lively, polyglot, turbulent place—just like New York today. It was founded for

the express purpose of doing business—rare at the time—and though its aims were materialistic, they bred the virtue of tolerance. As in old Amsterdam, almost anything was permitted so long as it was not bad for trade—and that is still true of the New York we know today.

To us, New York feels much more like a Dutch city than an English one. It has the same aggressive thrust as Amsterdam. And like the Dutchman, the New Yorker is a direct, no-nonsense person.

Perhaps that is the heritage we left behind—to survive long after the English in turn moved out.

*The American Dutch,  
Their Church,  
and the Revolution*

JAMES TANIS

**F**ROM the outset of the American Revolution, the British rightly realized that their hope for victory lay in dividing the northern colonies from the middle and southern colonies by controlling the Hudson River valley. Little could Henry Hudson have realized in 1609, as he sailed up the river that was to bear his name, that the Dutch who were to take up his claim would provide the backbone of resistance to the British cause 170 years later.

These middle colony Dutch—those who spoke the language, worshipped mostly in the Reformed Church, and exemplified the Dutch heritage in their homes and manners—were by no means limited to those of Netherlandish blood. Some, like the House of Orange itself, were German in origin; others were Swiss; some were French; and some had even come from Britain. A few were assimilated in the colonies; but most had "become Dutch" in the old country itself. A typical example was the boy Robert Livingston, who, with his family, migrated to Rotterdam from Scotland among a group of religious refugees at the time of the Stuart restoration. In 1673, having adopted the Dutch culture of his neighbors, nineteen-year-old Robert sailed for the New World, where he was to become one of the richest and most powerful men in New York. In Albany he married the widow Alida Schuyler van Rensselaer, and their offspring for generations were among the leaders of the Dutch community. The ancient Dutch hospitality to foreigners was a part of the cultural pattern that these "new Dutch" absorbed and brought with them to America.

The pivotal role of the Hudson Valley in American history became most powerfully clear in the 1750's, at the time of the French and Indian War. Archibald Kennedy, married to the widow of a Dutch settler, was an astute American political observer of the time. He noted