



New Amsterdam  
HISTORY CENTER

## NEWS FROM NEW NETHERLAND

### The First Families

#### An “Interview” with One of the First Colonists, Catalina Trico

In 1626 Pieter Schaghen writes “our people there are doing well and living in peace. Also, their wives have had children there.” Joris Jansen Rapalje and his wife Catalina Trico arrived in New Netherland on the *Eendracht* in 1624. By the summer of 1626, as reported in the Schaghen letter, the colonists had been so successful in farming that they were raising crops of “summer-grains, namely wheat, rye, barley, oats, buckwheat, canary-seed, beans, and flax,” and they had evidently also had children. Catalina’s daughter Sarah Rapalje is said to have been the first child born to early settlers in New Amsterdam.

By good fortune we have two “interviews”—depositions—made by Catalina Trico. In the first of these, dated in New York on February 14, 1685, she states before Governor Thomas Dongan that she is about 80 years old, and that she came to New York around 1623 or 1624. She says that during the passage “four women were married at sea,” and after arrival and staying for about three weeks in Manhattan, those couples went to settle at the Delaware River.

Her second deposition was made at her house on Long Island on October 17, 1688, when she was about 83 years old. She describes how her group went to Albany (Fort Orange), and built a small fort and huts of bark to live in. The skipper of the ship, Adriaen Joriszen (Thienpont), established excellent trade relations with the local Native Americans, and she says that during the time she lived there, the “Indians were all as quiet as lambs and came and traded with all the freedom imaginable.” She adds that she then moved to New York, where she lived for many years before relocating to Long Island.

In the quoted words I hear the characteristic expressions of a person of a lively, imaginative turn of mind—in them the voice of Catalina Trico seems to echo down through the centuries like the sound of a phonograph record from long ago, to tell us what it was like for her living on the frontier and trading with the Native Americans in the earliest days of settlement in New Netherland.

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*February 10, 2016*