



NEW AMSTERDAM YESTERDAY AND TODAY

New Amsterdam History Center Newsletter – Vol. 2 No. 1

Spring 2019

Dear Friends of NAHC,

We are pleased to offer you the fifth edition of the NAHC newsletter this spring. There are some fascinating articles for you to peruse and we hope you enjoy reading them. Historian Frank Sypher has written a comprehensive article about *The West India Company's Patroonships in New Netherland*, and Professor Noah Gelfand has recapped the fascinating talk he gave for NAHC last November about *Jewish Colonization and the Question of Religious Toleration in New Netherland*.

In the months to come we are looking forward to a talk on *Cartographic Visions of New Netherland and New Amsterdam* to be given by Ian Fowler, curator and Geospatial Librarian for the Map Division of the New York Public Library, and a surprise excursion is being planned for late May. We hope you will be able to join us.

We are pleased that our patron program continues to grow, and we hope more of you who are not part of the NAHC community, will consider supporting us. We have added two new patron categories, dual for couples, and an organizational level.

Patrons benefit from reduced rate and sometimes complimentary admission to our events. As always, we would be happy to organize a project of special interest to you if you would like to sponsor it.

We count on our patrons to support our programs and projects with their dues and contributions. If you are able to make a financial commitment to our mission at this time, please refer to the bottom of the newsletter and choose a patronage level that suits your needs. Your financial support enables us among other things, to create this newsletter, to offer enriching programs, and to make them available to you and the general public with video recordings on our website. If you would like to underwrite any of these projects, please let me know.

On behalf of the entire Board of NAHC, I thank you for your continuing support.

Esme E. Berg
Interim President/Executive Director

In Praise of Painting: Dutch Masterpieces at the MET

NAHC Patrons Are Treated to a Private Tour Led by Curator, Adam Eaker

Suzanne Roff, PhD
Member of the NAHC Board of Trustees

Excerpted from “[Dutch Masters and You: Viewing Genealogy in Context](#)” at www.ExpressiveAge.com lifestyle blog by Suzanne Roff, PhD, NAHC Board Member.

I recently attended a small private NAHC tour of the Met Museum’s Dutch Masterpieces led by the Assistant Curator for the exhibit, Adam Eaker, PhD. There has been a lot of press and excitement about this special exhibition (October 2018 until October 2020) -- evidence of the perennial popularity of the Dutch masters.

Listening to Dr. Eaker’s breadth of knowledge about the Dutch masters and passion for the time period and work was inspiring and made me think of the artists in a new light. For example, I had never considered the rivalries that existed among the great painters. Professional and artistic rivalries were commonplace as artists competed to supply art to newly-rich patrons—who flaunted their wealth by lining their walls with canvases on a wide variety of subjects.

Painter and art theorist of the time, Gerard de Lairese is said to have considered Rembrandt's painterly style as throwing mud on canvas! (Thankfully, Rembrandt was unshaken by the criticism and continued to express himself, never knowing that one day how he, and his work, would become immortal. Or, as Dr. Eaker said of the incident, "we won't know what will be valued 100 years from now!")

The Exhibit brings together pieces from across the museum, all of the same time period and place. Hanging them together brings a new dimension to the works—and adds a new context to them.

Visiting the collection also provided me with new historical and visual context for the lives of some of my Dutch ancestors. The array of paintings depicted citizens with their fashion, their daily lives, and their desire to express and redefine themselves as a prosperous, powerful country finally free from Spanish rule.

I learned that still life paintings were a specialty of women artists who, by social tradition, were not allowed to paint nudes. A whole genre of paintings depicted morality plays on canvas—some with raucous, drunken tavern and home scenes, while another depicted morally-correct classical tales. The final part of the exhibit is dedicated to scenes of life within the home—where you find hushed Vermeers depicting the mundane in masterful fashion.

Try not to miss this superb tribute to Dutch Masters to better understand the lives of your own ancestors.

- Custom House (location of Fort Amsterdam)
- Whitehall Street (home of Petrus Stuyvesant)
- Pearl Street (the eastern shore line of New Amsterdam, named for the hills of oyster shells left by Native Americans, site of the first church)
- Stone Street (location of many taverns, the Dutch introduced beer to Manhattan)
- Wall Street (named for the wall of tree trunks erected to protect the settlement from the English)

The tour was followed by a complimentary drink and an optional dinner at Fraunces Tavern, where George Washington bid farewell to his officers in 1783.

The tour is described online at

<https://izi.travel/en/0444-how-dutch-is-new-york-the-new-amsterdam-tour/en>



New Amsterdam History Center Patrons at the Metropolitan Museum – January 28, 2019

The West India Company's Patroonships in New Netherland

F. J. Sypher

The West India Company's plan to help the early settlers in New Netherland become self-sufficient by sending them in 1625 a shipment of about 100 head of livestock to use in farming the land did not lead to the desired results. First of all, although the complex shipping arrangements went off relatively smoothly and the farm animals were helpful, the colonists still faced many practical difficulties in preparing the land, much of which had never been systematically cultivated before.

Another problem was that initially all the property was owned by the WIC and the laborers were employees who often were not as committed to their work as they might have been if they had been property owners. Also, settlement proceeded slowly. The WIC found it difficult to attract suitable colonists to New Netherland, especially since social and economic conditions in the home country were relatively stable and prosperous at this time, and for most people there was little inducement for emigration. Thus, for various reasons the settlers in New Netherland did not become entirely self-sufficient as expected or hoped, and they continued to need assistance for their basic food and other provisions. These amounted to a significant expense for the WIC, which, as a private corporation, was supposed to show profits to its investors.

In the effort to confront this situation two parties developed among the directors of the WIC—known as the 19 men (*de Heeren XIX*). One party was in favor of continuing to invest in the settlement of the colony, both to secure the territory from the very real threat of invasion by English colonists moving in from New England, and also eventually to reap long-term profits from the produce and trade at New Netherland. The other party was in favor of more actively supporting the lucrative fur business so as to produce immediate profits for shareholders.

In considering the WIC directors' views on New Netherland one has to take into account the general context of Dutch interests throughout the area covered by their administration. New Netherland was only one part of their territory, and at this period it did not by any means seem like the most important part. The directors were also responsible for the profitable Dutch holdings among the West Indies islands, including St. Maarten, St. Eustatius, Saba, Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, with their extensive trading operations. In South America were the territories of Guiana and Brazil, which the Dutch saw as potentially the most productive and valuable of all. And the WIC also oversaw Dutch posts along the Guinea Coast of West Africa, and in Angola.

The compromise that the WIC directors reached in 1629 was in effect to privatize the colonization program for New Netherland, and thus to keep on trying to settle the area while attempting to minimize the expense to the corporation. This was to be accomplished by the establishment of the “patroon” system. The Dutch word *patroon* is from French *patron*, derived from Latin *patronus*, basically a “protector” and more specifically a “person who has undertaken to protect the interests of a community.”¹ The Dutch sense is comparable to the English sense of a *patron* as someone who contributes major financial and other support to an organization or enterprise.

Wealthy private investors would be invited to become patroons (or patrons)

of the WIC and would receive grants of hereditary ownership of large areas of territory in the colony, in return for taking responsibility for major costs of the settlement venture. The notion of granting patroonships was not a new idea—in colonial Brazil the Portuguese crown granted hereditary captaincies of territory to private individuals who would undertake the expense of colonization.²

The WIC program of patroonships was published in a pamphlet titled, in English, “Privileges granted by the Assembly of the Nineteen of the Chartered West-Indian Company to all those who shall establish any colonies in New Netherland” (Amsterdam: Marten Iansz Brandt, 1630).³

Some of the key proposals of the WIC’s thirty-one regulations governing patroonships were:

—That the patroon should settle 50 persons “upwards of fifteen years old; one-fourth part within one year, and within three years after the sending of the first, making together four years” (article III).

—That the patroons could settle their colonies along the shores of a navigable river, and would “forever possess and enjoy all the lands” within the limits of their grants (articles V, VI).

—That the patroons would be governed by the board of the WIC (article IX).

—That the patroons could trade “all along the coast” under specified conditions (articles XIII–XVIII).

—That the WIC would take the colonists “under their protection, and them defend against all foreign and domestic wars and violence, with the forces they have there, as much as lies in their power” (article XXV).

—That the patroons should “support a minister and schoolmaster, that the service of God and zeal for religion may not be neglected among them, and they shall, at the first, provide a comforter of the sick there” (article XXVII).

—That the colonists would be forbidden from making “any woollen, linen or other cloth, nor weave any other stuffs there” (article XXIX). (This was to protect the cloth industries of the Netherlands; the British colonists were under similar restrictions.)

—And finally, that “The Company promise to finish the fort on the island of the Manhattes as soon as possible and to put it in a posture of defense; and to cause these Privileges and Exemptions to be approved and confirmed by their High Mightinesses the Lords States General” (article XXXI).⁴

The first patroonships were taken up by five persons with connections to the WIC. Michael Pauw planned two settlements, one at the shore of the Versshe (Connecticut) River in the area of what is now Hartford, Connecticut, and another on the west bank of the Hudson, opposite the southern tip of Manhattan, which he named Pavonia, in the region of present-day Jersey City. An area near the South River (now the Delaware River) was planned by Samuel Godijn, with the name Swanendael. And in the same district Albert Coenratsz Burgh staked a claim.

Samuel Blommaert chose a site on the Versshe River. And Kiliaen van Rensselaer established two properties on opposite sides of the Hudson in the area of present-day Albany, New York. But of these ventures, most were either never actually put into operation, or else eventually went out of existence. Only Van Rensselaer's became firmly established.⁵

In 1640 the WIC again attempted to attract supporters, or "patroons" under a new set of regulations, issued in 1640, and at this time three investors came forward and made attempts to establish patroonships. Cornelis Melijn set up a grant on Staten Island; Adrian van der Donck founded an estate at Yonkers; and Meyndert Meyndertsz settled in New Jersey. But none of these patroonships were successful in the long term and in 1659 the whole program came to an end.⁶

The principal reasons why the patroonship program did not generally work out were that many of the participants were undercapitalized, and they found the conditions in New Netherland far more difficult than expected. Also, and perhaps most importantly, the WIC itself was not really in a position to defend the territory to the extent promised in the published articles. The director general in New Netherland actually had little power to prevent conflicts with Native Americans, and encroachment from the English in Connecticut and elsewhere.

1. N. van Wijk, *Franck's etymologisch woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal*, 2nd edition ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1912), p. 493; É. Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française, abrégé* par A. Beaujean (Paris: Gallimard Hachette, reprint 1959; first published 1875), p. 1585; *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, edited by P. G. W. Glare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968–1982), p. 1311.

2. Lilia M. Schwarcz and Heloisa M. Starling, *Brazil: A Biography*, translated from the Portuguese (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), p. 12

3. Title-page facsimile in: J. Franklin Jameson, editor, *Narratives of New Netherland 1609–1664*, in series *Original Narratives of Early American History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), facing page 90 (with the date of publication misprinted as "1830" instead of 1630). English translation of the 31 articles on pp. 90–96.

4. Quoted portions from the above-cited translation by Jameson.

5. Jaap Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 70.

Noah L. Gelfand, PH.D

During its four-decade existence, New Netherland attracted a remarkably diverse population. Colonial settlers adhered to various religious beliefs, including versions of Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, and Islam. Yet the Dutch Reformed religion was the only denomination permitted to worship in public.[i] Colonists of other faiths were entitled to liberty of conscience, but they could worship only within their own homes. This limited notion of religious toleration led to tensions between religious minorities and colonial authorities. The arrival of Jewish settlers in New Netherland highlights the difficulties inherent in its toleration policy, and their ultimate departure from the Dutch colony points to the greater religious and economic opportunities for Jews elsewhere in the Atlantic region.

Jewish engagement with New Netherland began in the summer of 1654, with Jews arriving on two ships that reached New Amsterdam within two and a half weeks of each other, though under very different circumstances. The *Peereboom* docked first, on August 22nd, having sailed from Amsterdam via London.[ii] On board were three Jews – Jacob Barsimon, Solomon Pietersen, and Asser Levy – who deliberately chose to migrate to the Dutch North American colony.[iii] On September 7th, twenty-three desperate Sephardic Jewish refugees from Dutch Brazil disembarked from the *St. Catrina* after a six-month odyssey that took them through the Caribbean to North America.[iv]

The latter group of impoverished refugees, posed a problem for New Netherland's director general, Petrus Stuyvesant, who on September 22nd, wrote a letter to his superiors at the Amsterdam Chamber of the Dutch West India Company (WIC). Asserting that these Jews were "very repugnant" to nearly everyone in the community, Stuyvesant told the WIC directors that he had "deemed it useful to require them in a friendly way to depart," adding that such a "deceitful race be not allowed further to infect and trouble this new colony." [v] For Stuyvesant, a staunch Calvinist already troubled with maintaining order in the pluralistic religious culture of New Netherland, the addition of these particular Jews was not welcomed.[vi]

Stuyvesant's letter to the WIC directors elicited a protest from the Sephardic community of Amsterdam, whose leaders wrote to the WIC requesting guarantees for their co-religionists to live and conduct business in the North American Dutch colony. They argued astutely that these Jews had been faithful during their time in Brazil; that they subsequently suffered poverty when the Dutch lost the colony; were a loyal and taxable population; and that trade would surely increase with their residence in New Netherland. Moreover, they shrewdly mentioned their investments in the West India Company, and that the French had allowed them to trade and settle

in Martinique while the English had welcomed them in Barbados.[vii]

In April 1655, the WIC declared that Jews “may travel and trade to and in New Netherland and live and remain there, provided the poor among them shall not become a burden to the company or to the community, but be supported by their own nation.”[viii] The company was most concerned to assure that the twenty-three did not become a financial drain on the struggling colony. The WIC made clear to Stuyvesant that Jews were as welcome to stay as any other group, if they could support themselves. Financial solvency, rather than religious identification, appears to be the key factor in this episode. Significantly, this explains why the three earlier Jewish immigrants - Barsimon, Pietersen, and Levy - who presumably had sufficient resources, were not included in Stuyvesant’s demand to depart the colony.

In the next few years, a small number of Jews – around 50 over the entire history of the colony - migrated to New Amsterdam directly from the Netherlands. These Jews petitioned for the privilege to pray publicly in a synagogue, but were only permitted to worship privately in their homes.[ix] This policy was consistently applied to other minority faiths in New Netherland in the 1650s and 1660s.

Jewish inhabitants of the colony nevertheless tried to facilitate the practice of Judaism, even if only in their New Amsterdam homes. A green veiled Torah arrived from the Netherlands in 1655.[x] Jews also gained the right to purchase a plot of land to bury their dead in 1656, though its location and whether any Jews were actually buried there is unknown. A second burial plot was purchased by Joseph Bueno de Mesquita in 1682, well after New Netherland had become New York. He was buried there in 1683 – the oldest surviving Jewish grave in the city.[xi]

Despite these important developments, and others such as winning the Burgher Right of citizenship through another round of petitioning, a permanent Jewish community did not form in New Netherland. Tellingly, there is no record of a rabbi ever traveling to the colony. Almost all of the Jewish men and women who arrived in the 1650s and early 1660s were gone by 1664. Indeed, by 1663 the green-covered Torah was back in Amsterdam, apparently because a minyan could not be maintained in the city.[xii] The following year, Asser Levy and his wife appear to have been the only Jews present in the Dutch colony when it fell to English invaders.

The almost complete disappearance of Jews from the colony was not owing only to the anti-Semitic environment fostered by Petrus Stuyvesant, nor to the way each privilege had to be grudgingly extracted from authorities by Jews. Instead, most Jews willing to migrate to the New World during the mid-seventeenth-century focused on the more hospitable Caribbean and South America. In these locations they could exploit commercial networks among the Sephardic Diaspora and create an economic niche for themselves. Because of their expertise in the transatlantic sugar trade,

their language skills, and family connections among New Christians in the Spanish empire, Jewish settlers in the Caribbean and South America were able to extract charters from colonial authorities guaranteeing their privilege of worship in public synagogues. The most significant Jewish communities developed in Surinam and Curaçao, with the latter becoming the capital of New World Jewry during the early modern era. Ultimately, New Netherland (and even early New York) could not compete with these locations offering economic opportunities and the freedom to openly practice the Jewish religion.

[i] Jaap Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca, NY, 2009), 144 and E. B. O’Callaghan and B. Fernow, trans. and eds., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany, 1853-1883), I: 110.

[ii] Leo Hershkowitz, “By Chance or Choice: Jews in New Amsterdam, 1654,” *de Halve Maen* 77 (2004): 23.

[iii] Leo Hershkowitz makes the case for Barsimon, Pietersen, and Levy all arriving on the *Peereboom*. See *Ibid.*, 23.

[iv] “Record from the burgomasters and schepens of New Amsterdam,” September 7, 1654, in Arnold Wiznitzer, “Exodus from Brazil and Arrival in New Amsterdam of the Jewish Pilgrim Fathers, 1654” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 44 (1954): 87, 91-93.

[v] Extract from “Letter of Petrus Stuyvesant to the Amsterdam Chamber of the Dutch West India Company, Manhattan,” September 22, 1654, in Morris U. Schappes, ed., *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875* (hereafter *DHJUS*) (New York, 1950), 1-2.

[vi] Stuyvesant’s comments about Jewish refugees should be understood within the context of his similar treatment of Lutheran and Quaker minorities in New Netherland., not simply as a manifestation of his anti-Semitism (though he certainly harbored prejudices against Jews that were typical of the age). See “Letter from the Directors to Stuyvesant,” June 14, 1656, in Charles T. Gehring, trans. and ed., *Correspondence, 1654-1658*, New Netherland Documents Series, vol. 12 (Syracuse, NY, 2003), 93.

[vii] Petition of the Amsterdam Jews “To the Honorable Lords, Directors of the Chartered West India Company, Chamber of the City of Amsterdam,” January 1655, in *DHJUS*, 2-4.

[viii] Extract from “Reply by the Amsterdam Chamber of the West India Company to Stuyvesant’s letter,” April 26, 1655, in *DHJUS*, 4-5.

[ix] There were between 10 and 15 Jewish families in New Netherland during its existence as a colony; see Joyce D. Goodfriend, *Before the Melting Pot: Society and Culture in New York City, 1664-1730* (Princeton, 1992), 12.

[x] See Isaac S. Emmanuel, “New Light on Early American Jewry,” *American Jewish*

Archives 7 (1955): 17-23.

[xi] See David De Sola Pool, *Portraits Etched in Stone: Early Jewish Settlers, 1682-1831* (New York, 1952), 8, 10-11.

[xii] See Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, 2004), 10. A minyan is the prayer quorum of ten males over the age of thirteen required to hold a service.



Noah Gelfand

November 8, 2018

Danny Noorlander

New Amsterdam History Center Lecture Series

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Thank you,
NAHC Board of Trustees

NAHC Events and Milestones

Casey Kemper, President of the New Amsterdam History Center for the last 10 years, retired from his position at the Collegiate Church Corporation as of December 31, 2018, and has passed the NAHC baton to Esme Berg, who will serve as Interim President until a new President can be found. Casey remains a dedicated NAHC Trustee. The Board of Trustees wishes to thank Casey for his many years of dedicated service and leadership as President of the organization.

NAHC is very pleased to welcome Michael E. Cavanaugh, Esq. and Ina Lee Selden, as the newest members of the Board of Trustees. Michael is a partner at the law firm, Kranjac, Tripodi & Partners LLP, and Ina is President of the tour company, Manhattan Passport.

Patron Program

JOIN THE NAHC FAMILY and support our mission to inform the public about the history of New Amsterdam & New Netherland during the short period of Dutch rule in the 17th Century. **PATRON** benefits include invitations to patron only events and free admission to general events.

Support our programs or become a sponsor of some of our events. Patrons will receive invitations to special patron-only events as well as discount admission to other events NAHC is a 501(c)(3) corporation. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

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