New Amsterdam Yesterday, & Today

New Amsterdam History Center Newsletter
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Editor, Firth Haring Fabend Production Editor, Cynthia Bogart

What's New at NAHC

Dear NAHC Patrons, Sponsors, Faithful Readers, and everyone interested in 17th-century New Amsterdam,

I want to thank all of you for your continuing interest in and support for all that NAHC strives to, and continues to, accomplish.

As we plan our spring, summer, and fall programs, my fellow Trustees and I remain faithfully committed to providing you with the highest quality in-person and virtual events, along with timely scholarly articles.

Our 2025 programming concluded with a series of some of our best-attended programs in recent years, from a book talk with Professor Maeve Kane on "Munsee Lenape Sovereignty and Survival"; another talk with Russell Shorto and Dennis Maika discussing Russell's latest book, *"Taking Manhattan"*; a lively discussion with Debra Bruno and Eleanor Mire regarding Debra's book, *"Hudson Valley Reckoning"*, and a standing-room-only closing event for the "New Visions of Old New York" with NAHC's 3D Mapping Early New York Project prominently displayed, at the NYC Municipal Archives on Chambers Street in Lower Manhattan.

I want to give special thanks here to the people who make these programs happen: Esme Berg for her leadership and project management, Vanessa Sellers for guiding NAHC's Mapping Early New York Project, Sandy Lazo for her valuable input in general, Cynthia Bogart for her hard work on the NAHC website, and Firth Fabend as Newsletter editor.

I hope to meet all of you in person in 2026, and to welcome your input for future programs that continue to tell the story of New Amsterdam. Your suggestions, support, and financial contributions are essential components for our continuing success. If you have not done so recently, please take a moment to scroll through our website and the numerous topics that are covered. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,

Michael E. Cavanaugh,
President

New York City Municipal Archives (DORIS) Closes New Visions of Old New York Event

NYC
Office of the Mayor
New Amsterdam
HISTORY CENTER
NYC
Department of Records & Information Services
NEW VISIONS OF
OLD NEW YORK

Making History Visible: New Visions of Old New York at the Municipal Archives

On December 11, 2025, the New York City Municipal Archives (DORIS) buzzed with conversation, curiosity, and discovery as a full house gathered for *New Visions of Old New York: Making History Visible*. Hosted by the Municipal Archives and the New Amsterdam History Center, this morning program marked the closing of a groundbreaking exhibition—and, fittingly, the opening of new collaborations reimagining how early New York's history is shared with the public. The exhibit formed part of the larger *Founded By NYC* , the City's year-long commemoration of its official founding as New Amsterdam 400 years earlier.

Read more here

Mapping New Amsterdam: Reconstructing a Seventeenth-Century City for a Global Audience

by Vanessa Bezemer Sellers, Ph.D.
Director, Mapping Early New York
Vice President, New Amsterdam History Center

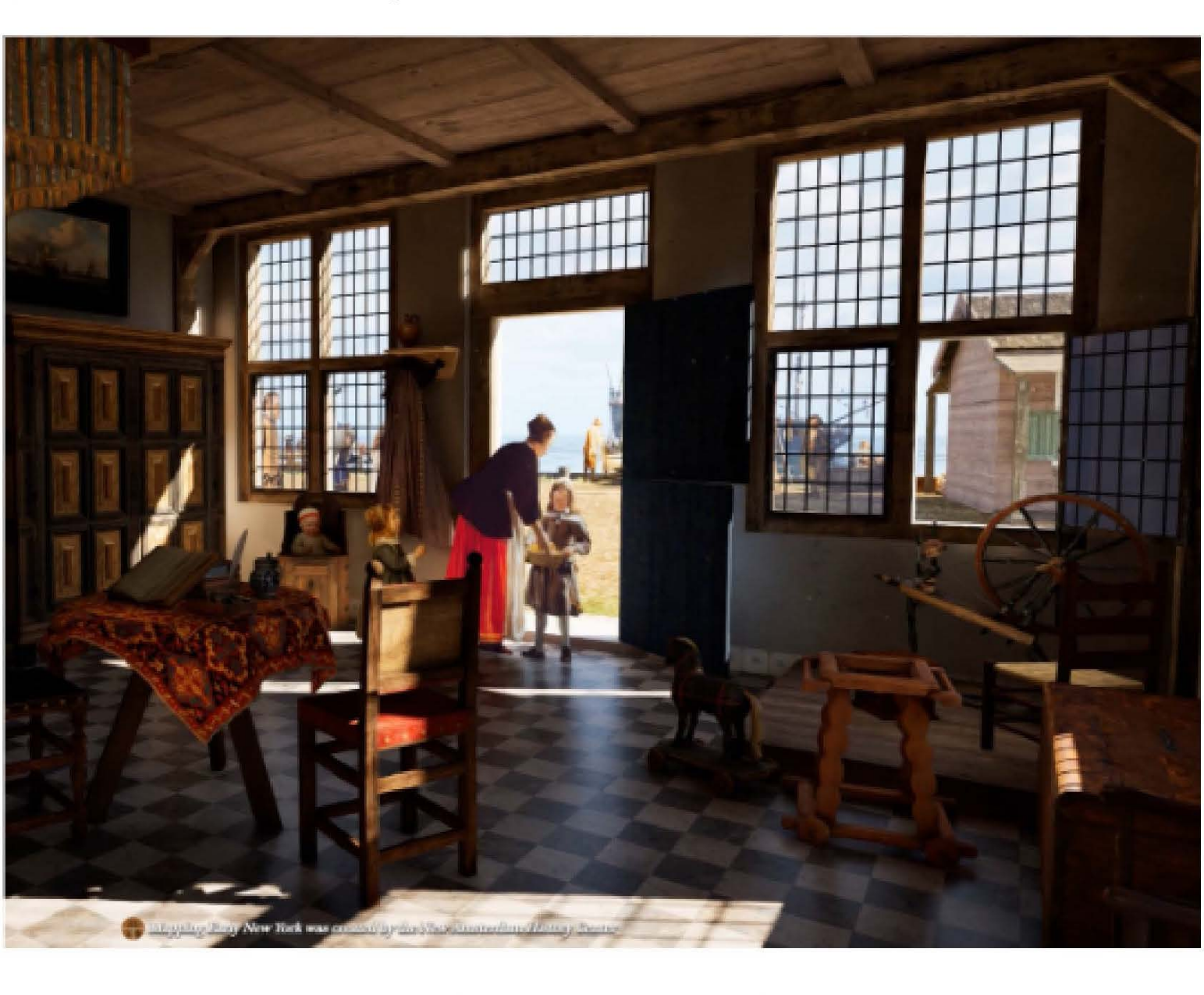
For more than fifteen years, the Mapping Early New York Project has steadily transformed the way audiences encounter the city's early Dutch beginnings—layer by layer, map by map, story by story. What began as an ambitious digital experiment has become a cornerstone of NAHC's work: an interactive platform and investigative tool that merges rigorous archival research with immersive 3D reconstruction, inviting visitors to step directly into daily life in seventeenth-century New Amsterdam.

This past year, Mapping's interactive screen was featured prominently at the New York City Municipal Archives (DORIS), and it will soon return to the New York Historical—where it appeared for the first time in 2024—to enrich the upcoming exhibition *Old Masters, New Amsterdam* that envisions life in the early Dutch settlement.

New "Hotspots" on the Interactive Castello Plan

Recently, two significant new sites were added to the interactive Mapping touchscreen, expanding the experience from ten to twelve "hotspots" (red buttons). The Kierstede House Interior and the Indian Trading House—both located along the waterfront on Pearl Street—bring fresh depth to the platform. Designed by our dedicated 3D modeler, Eduard van Dijk, with important input by Drew Shuptar-Rayvis, Jeroen van den Hurk, Lavada Nahon, and other members of the Mapping Creative and Scholarly Team led by Director Vanessa Bezemer Sellers, these reconstructions were made possible through the generous support of the Society of Daughters of Holland Dames and the Dutch Consulate.

Together, these new additions illuminate complementary dimensions of early New Amsterdam: the domestic world of one of its most prominent families and the city's emergence as a vibrant trading center and cultural crossroads, where Indigenous communities and newly arrived Europeans met, traded, negotiated, and at times clashed, shaping a shared and often contested urban landscape.



Interior of the Kierstede House – Front Room

The digitally reconstructed **Kierstede House**, shown in six separately recreated spaces, aptly combines family life, commerce, and medicine within a compact Dutch urban dwelling. Facing the harbor, with a view of the Indian Trading House, the main front room (comparable to a Dutch voorhuis) functioned as both parlor and trading space. It contained a large linen kast, a table with Turkish carpet, a spinning wheel and children's toys—evidence of a large household that in 1664 included ten children and several enslaved people. Prominently placed here was the wooden chest of Sara Kierstede's mother, Anneken Jans (Annetje Jans Bogardus), which symbolized family lineage and continuity. For the reconstruction of this room and the other interior spaces, contemporary paintings of Dutch domestic interiors, as well as surviving furniture pieces in Dutch and American museum collections, provided inspiration as described in the Mapping *Encyclopedia*.

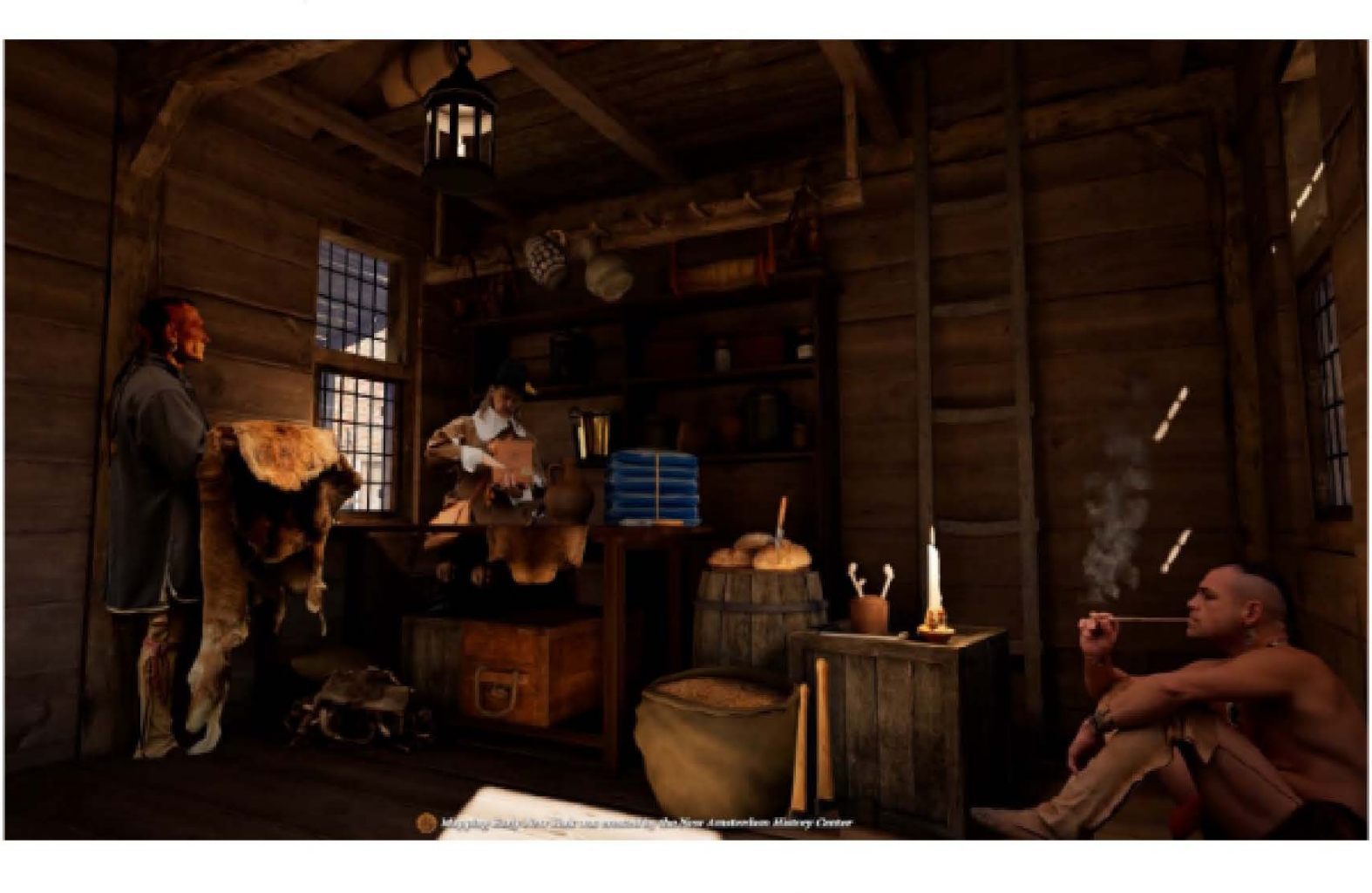
The Kierstede kitchen, with its built-in cupboard bed or bedstead (bedstede), formed the working heart of the home. Enslaved women tended the hearth, cooked in suspended pots and iron kettles, and managed barrels of small beer, keeping watch over children underfoot.

Behind the kitchen, Hans Kierstede's apothecary extended this culture of labor and care: shelves lined with scales, mortars, hourglasses, recipe books, herbals, and jars of both imported and locally gathered plants reflected expanding medical knowledge and the reach of global trade. Many remedies were prepared from medicinal herbs cultivated in the apothecary's back garden, drawing on a blend of European practice and acquired Indigenous knowledge. To ensure the historical integrity of this reconstructed space—and to represent the labor of the enslaved workers with accuracy and care—culinary historian Lavada Nahon reviewed the 3D model and contributed essential insights.

Upstairs, the large, light-filled **front chamber** of the Kierstede house may well have been Sara's favorite room, providing privacy while also offering a full view of the harbor and street activities.

It likely functioned as a family space for sleeping, sewing, reading, playing music, and childbirth. Furnished with a curtained bed, wicker cradle, linen cupboard, and spindle-back and Spanish chairs, it embodied comfort and sociability.

In the rear room behind, cupboard beds will have clustered around the chimney for warmth. By contrast, the unheated attic above—used for storage and as sleeping quarters for enslaved people—revealed the stark inequalities embedded within the household. Together, these interconnected spaces present a home that was simultaneously dwelling, workplace, and trading place, in short: a microcosm of New Amsterdam's diverse and complex Atlantic world.

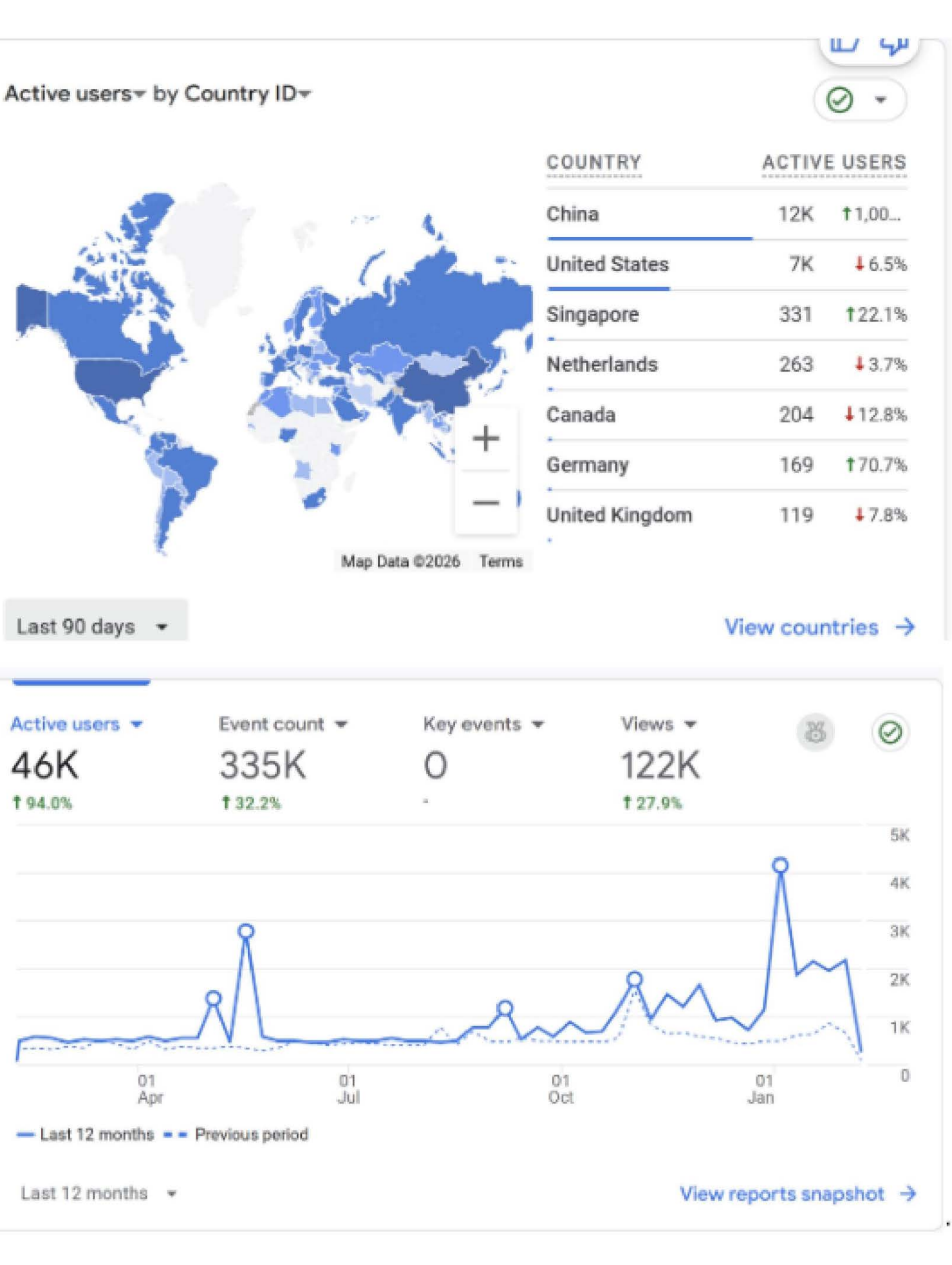


Interior of the Indian Trading House

The second new "hotspot," the **Indian Trading House,** is presented in both its exterior and carefully rendered interior layout. Established in 1661–1662 along the waterfront and easily reached by canoe, the trading area drew Indigenous traders, townspeople, and Company officials each Saturday—the colony's official market day. Wampum and beaver pelts functioned as currency, while furs, foodstuffs, and tools changed hands. Inside the timber-framed structure—rich, one can imagine, with the scent of furs and tobacco—shelves likely held duffel cloth, knives, hatchets, and iron kettles. Here, multiple languages were spoken, bargains were struck, and exchanges shaped the burgeoning economic life of New Amsterdam. The architectural details and interior contents of the Indian Trading House were developed in close consultation with NAHC's Native American advisor, Drew Shuptar-Rayvis, ensuring that the space reflects both historical evidence and authentic Indigenous perspectives.

Analyzing the Impact of Mapping Early New York Project

Today, the global impact of the Mapping Project can be measured through data provided online. Graphs of active users and charts of Mapping traffic, such as the ones shown below, indicate the rapidly growing number of viewers and the total number and percentage of users arranged by country.



COUNTRY	ACTIVE USERS	
China	12K	↑1,00…
United States	7K	↓6.5%
Singapore	331	↑22.1%
Netherlands	263	↓3.7%
Canada	204	↓12.8%
Germany	169	↑70.7%
United Kingdom	119	↓7.8%

As these numbers show, the Mapping Early New York project is reaching a growing international audience. More than a 3D digital reconstruction, it connects continents, communities, and conversations relevant to this day and age.

Grounded in archival research, guided by scholarly advisors, and featured in several exhibitions in New York, with potential forthcoming presentations in the Netherlands, the Mapping Early New York Project continues to expand its reach and insights today, as it will in the years ahead.

The NAHC Book Talk Series

The New Amsterdam History Center is pleased to announce the launch of the NAHC BOOK TALK SERIES. Several times a year, the series will feature authors speaking about their recently published books on a wide variety of topics related to the New Netherland colony and its center in New Amsterdam. These exciting events, which will be presented either online or in person, will introduce audiences to the latest and most interesting books about this important period in our nation's history.

Our first Book Talk, in March, will present Elisabeth Paling Funk discussing *The Dutch World of Washington Irving: Knickerbocker's History of New York and the Hudson Valley Folktales*. Dr. Funk's book documents the Dutch context of Irving's life and how his work helped to preserve New York's Dutch heritage.

In April, Dawn Brokaw Doyle will talk about her historical novel *Salt People of the Cloud Houses: The Story of Sarah Rapalje*, which is based on the life of one of the author's ancestors.

And in May, Alan Mikail will discuss his new book, *Newcomers: The Story of Anthony and Grietje and the Founding of New York*, with historian Susanah Shaw Romney.

Please continue to check our website for more details on these virtual or live events, or join our mailing list by making a donation to NAHC.

ARE YOU AN AUTHOR - OR DO YOU KNOW OF ONE?

If you have recently published a book (or will soon) about any aspect of New Amsterdam and New Netherland, or if you know of someone who has (or will), we would be delighted to talk to you about featuring it in the Book Talk series. Please contact us at events@newamsterdamhistorycenter.org - put "Book Talk" in the subject line - and we will get in touch promptly.

BE A FOUNDING SUPPORTER OF THE BOOK TALK SERIES

We invite you to join a select group of Founding Supporters of the NAHC Book Talk Series. Be among the first ten supporters to donate at least $250 to help underwrite the series and you will receive the following benefits:

- advance notice of each Book Talk as soon as dates are confirmed
- two free tickets to any in-person Book Talk
- complimentary copies of two books, selected by NAHC, about New Amsterdam/New Netherland
- Q&A priority - we'll be sure that your question is asked in virtual events, or that you can ask it yourself at in-person events

Or, if you would like to be an exclusive sponsor of one NAHC Book Talk Series event, please contact Esme Berg at events@newamsterdamhistorycenter.org.

Review of Russell Shorto, Taking Manhattan: The Extraordinary Events that Created New York and Shaped America

Firth Haring Fabend

Russell Shorto's new and eighth book, *Taking Manhattan: The Extraordinary Events that Created New York and Shaped America*, is the result of prodigious research into a subject that has received very little attention in the 400 years since it happened. Yet Shorto writes in such a beguiling and conversational manner that the reader is hardly aware of the examination and inquiry undergirding it. We are disarmed from the outset by his style, tone, voice, and charisma.

Shorto structures the subject matter into four parts. In part one, he deftly does away with a number of common misunderstandings about our history. For one, the British action in 1664 should not be viewed as the result of a hostile takeover; rather, it was an "invention," the creation of something wholly new, a society made up of a mix of different kinds of people. Today, we call it pluralism and take it for granted. In the seventeenth century it was a new thing. He draws the theme of the invention of our history throughout the book.

He elaborates it most convincingly in Chapter 15, where he considers what loyalty to this idea might have meant to a beleaguered Pieter Stuyvesant on the verge of yet another war with his English archrival. He was "duty-bound" to serve both the Dutch West India Company, his employer, and the Dutch Republic and win such a war, of course, but at the same time he was coming to realize that he owed loyalty as well to Manhattan and to the whole of New Netherland. "If it was to continue, if this paradoxical kind of city with its mishmash of peoples, faiths, and languages could somehow be preserved through all of this, might this be a kind of victory in itself?"

Readers will agree. It was the kind of victory that did not require either party to be subdued. Both could win, in their own ways. And both did.

Shorto's gems throughout *Taking Manhattan* are many, and one of the best is his portrait of a man unknown to American readers: English Colonel Richard Nicholls, "Stuyvesant's nemesis," as Shorto describes him. Richard Nicholls, for whom there are 38 subentries under his name in the index was born into a world torn by war and theological dissension. As Shorto writes, he "spent much of his life on horseback, a sword in his hand," doing his best to bring a new world into being. When we meet him, he is 41 years old, unmarried, childless, with his savings in cash. "All he really has . . . is an unwavering, lifelong commitment" to James, the Duke of York, brother to King Charles and soon to be King himself. For James he served as groom of the bedchamber, which does not mean he went around picking up James's socks, Shorto writes. Rather it was a high-ranking position that placed him among the King's most trusted servants, ordered with carrying out important missions that he performed with distinction. In Nicholls, we have, indeed, a new "American" hero, if by American we mean courageous, honorable, dependable, and constant, and one whose actions steered our history.

I hope New Amsterdam History Center members and friends will read this book and thank Russell Shorto for writing it, his gift to us, to New York, and to America.

Newcomers: The Story of Anthony and Grietje and the Founding of New York

Alan Mikhail is the Chace Family Professor of History at Yale University. He is the author of six books that have been translated into ten languages.

In *Newcomers*, Alan Mikhail upends the traditional story of America's origins through the revelatory tale of a seventeenth-century immigrant couple, Anthony and Grietje. Married in Amsterdam, the destitute pair emerged from lives of piracy and prostitution in Europe and arrived in 1630s Dutch New Amsterdam. Hoping to start a new life, the couple built a farm on the southern tip of Manhattan. Here, they would eventually come to battle Dutch authorities and brawl with their neighbors, all detailed in the printed records of New Netherland. The swarthy Anthony was attacked for being the Muslim he was not, while Grietje, a German barmaid, was pilloried for her perceived loose morals, although she refuted this accusation.

Eventually ejected from New Amsterdam by Dutch officials in 1639, they were exiled to the "frontier," to what is now Gravesend, Brooklyn, where they and their four daughters took over land from Native Americans and defended themselves against English encroachers from the north. In time, the family would come to own one of the largest estates on Long Island in the period. After Grietje died, Anthony moved back to what had become English Manhattan as one of the richest men in seventeenth-century New York. This rowdy couple's descendants include some of the most distinguished names in American social and political history, among them Vanderbilts and President Warren G. Harding.

Pushing back against often salacious mythology, Mikhail's *Newcomers* is a serious treatment of the lives of Anthony and Grietje. Deeply researched, it offers a story of New Netherland and New York like no other, along the way revealing new histories of American immigration, anti-Muslim sentiment, and female defiance.

Upcoming Events

Check our website for more events and updates

- *The Dutch World of Washington Irving: Knickerbocker's History of New York and the Hudson Valley Folktales* with Elisabeth Paling Funk - March 25th
- *Salt People of the Cloud Houses: The Story of Sarah Rapalje* with Dawn Brokaw Doyle - April 16th
- *Newcomers: The Story of Anthony and Grietje and the Founding of New York* Author Alan Mikail in conversation with Susanah Shaw Romney - May 13th
- "Old Masters, New Amsterdam" an exhibit at New York Historical. NAHC's 3-D Model of New Amsterdam in 1660 will be featured as part of this exhibit - May 1 through August 30

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