

De Nieuw Nederlansche Mercurius



Vol. 20, No. 1

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February 2004

Upcoming Events

Until May 2, 2004. At the Bruce Museum in Greenwich CT: "Love Letters: Dutch Genre Paintings in the Age of Vermeer," an exhibit about writing letters, features 44 paintings from European and American public and private collections. The exhibit focuses on the interest of Dutch artists for scenes, showing letter writing, dictating, sending and receiving of letters. These pictures reflect a style at the end of the 17th century, when there was activity in this field. At that time the Dutch Republic was the most literate area of Europe. Bruce Museum of Arts and Science. 1 Museum Drive. 203- 869-0376.

www.brucemuseum.org

March 18, 2004. Book Talk at the South Street Seaport Museum. Russell Shorto presents *The Island at the Center of the World*, in which he explores the history of Nieuw Amsterdam through the vision of Adriaen van der Donck. Book signing. Wine & refreshments. Free (\$3 suggested donation). 7-9 pm. Go to: www.southstseaport.org/ for further information.

March 24, 2004. The Writers' Institute, Friends of the Library, and the FNN will sponsor an appearance of Russell Shorto who will discuss his book *The Island at the*



Purported portrait of Adriaen van der Donck
National Gallery of Art

Center of the World. Copies of the book will be available for sale and signing. 5-7 in the CEC's Clark Auditorium (Concourse level). Contact: 518-473-1189.

June 3-6, 2004. The 12th Interdisciplinary Conference of the American Association for Netherlandic Studies (ICNS) will be held at the U. of Minnesota on the theme: "The Future of the Past: The Low Countries in the New Europe." For more information go to their web site at: esc.cla.umn.edu/ICNS.htm

June 10-12, 2004. The Conference on New York State History will meet this year at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs. In recognition of the centennial of the New York City subway, papers and sessions on the subject of mass transit in New York State and City have been solicited. More program information will appear in the next issue; or, consult the conference website at: www.nyhistory.com/ for conference updates. NB: qualified commentators are being sought. If interested, email your area of expertise to Field Horne at conference@nyhistory.net

October 9, 2004. The 27th annual Rensselaerswijck Seminar will be held this year at Siena College in Loudonville, just north of Albany. The conference will be part of Siena's annual conference in its mediaeval studies program called the *Convivium*. Founded in 1999, *Convivium* is a multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural academic center focussed on the study of medieval and early modern life, in association with a range of departments and programs at Siena College. The Center's activities cover a period roughly from 400 C.E., the fall of the Roman Empire, to 1700 C.E.

The theme of this year's *Convivium* will be the Dutch heritage of the Capital district. Our Seminar will present a program on the Dutch heritage of the Capital District. More information to follow in the next *Marcurius*.

November 11–13, 2004. The Huguenot Historical Society of New Paltz, NY will host a conference called "From Nieuw Nederlandt to New York." For more information go to Call for Papers at our website www.nnp.org.

News

The Tantillo Gallery opens in downtown Albany. Historical artist L.F. Tantillo has long dreamed of having a gallery to display all his works under one roof. Dream has become reality. This month the Tantillo Gallery opened across from the pedestrian bridge in the Arcade building on the corner of Maiden Lane and Broadway. A visit to the Gallery is a must for anyone interested in Albany's rich heritage. In addition to forts Orange and Nassau, Tantillo has also brought his creative process to bear on the wide variety of the Hudson River's watercraft over the years, from *de Halve Maen* to passenger-carrying steamboats. The Gallery will be open M-F from 10 to 6; Saturday from 11 to 3, and off hours by appointment. Call 518-689-1212 for further information.

Publications

If you are interested in bringing yourself up-to-date on the state of the art of studies relating to Dutch relations with American Indians, a good place to begin is William A.

News of the Friends of New Netherland

The Annual Meeting of the Friends of New Netherland was held on January 24th, 2004, at the Rensselaer County Historical Society in Troy, NY. President John van Schaick welcomed an attendance of about 40, including Mrs. Anna Vietor of the Acorn Foundation, and noted that several trustees of the FNN provide connections with the Holland Society and the New Netherland Museum, organizations that share our interests. The president thanked the Rensselaer County Historical Society, notably Mr. Jim Corsaro, for their hospitality. President Van Schaick reported that the financial position of the Friends is sound, with enough funds to meet this year's costs. The current three-year matching grant from the NEH is in its final year; disposition on the grant proposal for the next cycle is pending.

At the Board of Trustees meeting held prior to the Annual Meeting, the president of FNN and the director of the New Netherland Project were directed to change the name of Friends of New Netherland to New Netherland Institute (NNI). NNI will become the corporate entity, with the director of the New Netherland Project, Dr. Gehring, as executive director and the president of FNN, John van Schaick, as its executive secretary. The New Netherland Institute will be responsible for all activities, such as awards and seminars that are not part of the primary mission of the New Netherland Project. Friends of New Netherland will become NNI's unincorporated subsidiary, responsible for activities such as membership and fund raising.

FNN's vice-president and chair of the nominating committee Charles Wendell announced that Greta Wagle, serving an interim term since June 2003, has been elected for a full three-year term as trustee of Friends of New Netherland. The chair noted with great regret that Dr. Andrew Brink has resigned from the Board. He announced that the nominating committee is actively searching for trustees who will be able to satisfy FNN's need for fund-raising, public relations, and legal expertise.

FNN's secretary, Elisabeth Funk, serving with the Webmaster as support team for FNN's e-Discussion Group, explained that this members-only service is another way for members to pool their collective knowledge, to pose and answer questions about all topics broadly relating to New Netherland, such as history, genealogy, language, demographics, and place names. She encouraged members to visit the NNP Website at www.nnp.org and communicate with their fellow NNP members.

Charles Gehring, executive director of NNI, reported on a busy and interesting year. All activities of the New Netherland Institute are developed to disseminate information: the 2003 Seminar was the first to be held in its name. A New Netherland exhibit, an initiative proposed and undertaken by trustee Greta Wagle, is planned for 2006 in conjunction with the State University of New York at its Albany Plaza site in a building that is a copy of the historic Cloth Hall of Ypres, Belgium. The exhibit will display items borrowed from various museums to show the region's cultural heritage of the low countries. The 2004 Alice P. Kenney Memorial Award ceremony will be held on June 13, location to be announced, and the Seminar will be in October (see under Events). A link, headed by trustee Charles Wendell, has been created with the Holland Society and its president Wm. Van Winkle, toward planning for 2009, the 400th anniversary of Hudson's voyage of discovery. The director noted that Janny Venema was in the Netherlands for research at the Scheepvaart Museum and the Gemeente Archief (Maritime Museum and Municipal Archives) of Amsterdam. He thanked Janny, Hennie Newhouse, Greta Wagle, Howard Funk, the Board of Trustees, and the members of FNN for their work and support, and gratefully recognized the contributions from Dr. Andrew Hendricks (Hendricks Manuscript Award) and the Cleveland Foundation.

After lunch, Dr. Elisabeth Paling Funk presented "Washington Irving as Folk Historian." After a brief biographical sketch, noting Irving's close contact with the Dutch-American community of New York in the late 18th and early 19th century, her talk focused on Irving's portrayal of that popular culture in his Knickerbocker works. Examples of customs and folk belief from these works were compared with Dutch folk collections of a slightly later date and their twentieth-century analyses to demonstrate that the Hudson Valley Dutch culture consisted unmistakably of transplanted Old-World Dutch traditions and that Irving's reliable portrayal of this culture merits his designation as New York's first folklorist. A lively discussion followed the presentation. [News submitted by Elisabeth Funk, secretary of the FNN]

Request from the FNN office: This is a reminder to those members who have yet to pay their 2004 dues. Your check for \$35 single membership or \$60 family or organization will help us pay our bills on time. Thank you for keeping us solvent.

Starna's "Assessing American Indian-Dutch Studies: Missed and Missing Opportunities" in *New York History*, Winter 2003.

It should come as no surprise that involvement in a war lasting eighty years would give rise to an active trade in armaments. This subject is explored in a series of articles compiled under the title *The Arsenal of the World, The Dutch Arms Trade in the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Jan Piet Puype and Marco van der Hoeven. Of interest to our readership will be J.P. Puype's "Dutch firearms from seventeenth-century Indian sites." Unfortunately, the original Dutch edition is now out of print. However, an English translation can be ordered by writing to M. van de Haar at the Legermuseum, Korte Geer 1, NL-2611 CA Delft, Netherlands; or, by fax at: 31-15-215 05 44, or email at: m.vandehaar@legermuseum.nl.

The New Netherland Museum announces the publication of *New Netherland: An Exploration of Past and Present, An Interdisciplinary Curriculum for the 4th Grade*. This curriculum has been developed in partnership with New York State certified educators, and introduces learning objectives within the framework of the history of the New Netherland colony. To order, send a \$20.00 made out to the New Netherland Museum. Payment includes purchase

price, taxes and shipping/handling. Mail the check with your mailing address to: New Netherland Museum P.O. Box 10609 Albany, NY 12201 USA

Food for Thought

If route 66 can conjure up nostalgia for a bygone era, why not experience some historical kicks on US route 9? If you look on a map of New York, US route 9 begins in northern New York on the Canadian border just west of Rouse's Point. Follow it south to Albany where it crosses to the east side of the Hudson River until crossing back to the west side via the George Washington Bridge. It continues south near the Atlantic coast of New Jersey until it reaches Cape May. At this point it jumps Delaware Bay via the ferry, to Lewes, Delaware, coming to an end in the southwest corner of the state near the village of Laurel. As far as we know it has the distinction of being the only federal highway that begins and ends within the boundaries of New Netherland. But what do we do with such a revelation? It is proposed to lobby Congress to designate US 9 a historical highway. Markers would inform travelers that they were motoring on the New Netherland Memorial Highway (or some such designation). Maps would be available both in hard copy and on our website tracing the route with historical information and suggestions for site seeing along the way. Tour groups and vacationers would have a suggested route to follow to experience the beautiful landscape of New Netherland and its historical sites from south to north. Our web-

site's *virtual tour* of New Netherland could serve as a guide to the *actual tour*. Inspiration for the idea came from our old friend and retired trustee George Damiano. Suggestions for bringing the idea to life are welcomed.

Dutch Courses

The European Studies Consortium at the University of Minnesota is organizing a two and a half day workshop for teachers of Dutch. It precedes the annual ICNS conference (see Events) from June 1-June 3, 2004. The workshop will be done in collaboration with the *Steunpunt Nederlands als Vreemde Taal* at the University of Amsterdam and the *Nederlandse Taalunie*. The theme is: Flemish-Dutch Culture in the Language Classroom: A Professional Development Workshop for Teachers of Dutch. Workshop Registration fee is \$100. Contact the European Studies Consortium at esc@umn.edu or 612-625-1856 for more information.

A new MA program on the Dutch Golden Age has been announced in London. Unlike the old MA that previously existed at the University College London, the new program is inter-collegiate, involving King's College and the Courtauld Institute as well as UCL. Also, unlike the old MA, the new program does not require that students already have a reading knowledge of Dutch before they begin. For further information: www.ucl.ac.uk/history/2003/admissions/maadmiss/dutchfull.htm; or email Prof. B. Kaplan at: b.kaplan@ucl.ac.uk

Totidem Verbis

On the 16th of March Russell Shorto's book *The Island at the Center of the World*, will be released by Doubleday. Twenty plus newspapers have already scheduled reviews of the work, including the New York Times and the Washington Post. If you have taken the virtual tour of New Netherland on our website, you are already familiar with Russell's prose style. The focus of the book is nicely summed up in the book's subtitle: *The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan, the Forgotten Colony that Shaped America*; however, it is also the story of a forgotten father (maybe grandfather?) of our country Adriaen van der Donck. Russell wrote the following piece especially for us.

A Genuine American

New Netherland has gotten short shrift in history. One of its unheralded legacies is that its capital, New Amsterdam, with its multiethnic population and commitment to free trade, provided the foundation on which New York City was built. But the influence of the Dutch colony extends far beyond the shores of Manhattan. The territory New Netherland covered would become the Middle Atlantic region of the United States. This same area would be the birthplace of the American melting pot, and, though history has failed to recognize the fact, New Netherland, which was itself a melting pot (one that defaulted to Dutch, not English, language and customs) was thus a contributor to America's pluralistic society. New Netherland's influence would extend across the United States for one simple reason: its capital was not located in some obscure corner but on Manhattan Island, which itself would exert a mighty influence. It was, after all, to Manhattan that generations of European immigrants came before they then fanned out across America.

One man more than any other was responsible for imprinting Dutch customs and influence on Manhattan, and thus influencing American culture. Adriaen van der Donck was trained as a lawyer in Leiden and traveled to New Netherland in 1641, originally to work at Kiliaen van Rensselaer's patroonship of Rensselaerswijck. But eventually he headed south, and became caught up in the power struggle in New Amsterdam between the West India Company's director, Willem Kieft, and the leading citizens of the city. Those citizens demanded that the Dutch government take direct control over the colony, so that they could be assured of a stable society. In time, Van der Donck took the

lead in this struggle, which would result in the Dutch government granting New Amsterdam a municipal charter. Through this means, Dutch laws and customs would permanently shape New York. Adriaen van der Donck thus emerges as a kind of forgotten founding father, who had an influence far beyond what he could have imagined.

But Van der Donck's role in shaping both New York's future and American culture has been obscured. This is in part because many of the petitions and other legal writings that came from the colonists in the 1640s were unsigned. In 2002, Dr. Willem Frijhoff, one of the preeminent Dutch historians working today in the area of New Netherland studies, shared with me his theory that Van der Donck must have been the author of most, if not all, of these legal writings, for he was the only man in the colony with legal training (besides Cornelis van Tienhoven, who, as Willem Kieft's loyal associate, would hardly have devoted himself to attacking the West India Company's rule).

Following Dr. Frijhoff's line of thought (which is spelled out in pages 735-738 of his book *Wegen van Evert Willemsz: Een Hollands weeskind op zoek naar zichzelf, 1607-1647*), I separated out of the archives of materials related to this period all documents that contained Latin legalisms, elaborate "interrogatories" and other such features. I then took a step that I hoped would serve as a check on the theory of Van der Donck's authorship. I had noted in some of the documents known to have been written by Van der Donck the repeated use of an unusual word: American. In the 1600s, the noun, applied to a person, was very rare. European colonists didn't use it in reference to themselves:

the Dutch colonists considered themselves "New Netherlanders," the English to the north were "New Englanders," and those to the south thought of themselves as "Virginians." Only very occasionally does one see "American" used in the period, when it refers to Indians. The first recorded usage in English is in 1578, in a report about Martin Frobisher's voyage to Canada: "the Americans...which dwell under the equinoctiall line." The usage is even rarer in Dutch writing of the period. The word typically employed by the Dutch to refer to the Indians was *wilden*, meaning natives or, as Van der Donck himself wrote, people who "seemed to be wild and strangers to the Christian religion." Van der Donck used that word, or else *naturellen*, people of nature, but he also, in a few places, referred to the Indians as Americans.

With the idea that "American" was a word that Van der Donck favored, I then did a search of the entire corpus of political documents related to the New Netherland colony that were retrieved from the Netherlands in the nineteenth century. I found nine occurrences of the term American, all referring to Indians, and all nine in documents that either have Van der Donck's name attached as the author or that Dr. Frijhoff and/or I had separately suspected were the work of Van der Donck.

With uncanny appropriateness, then, "American," turns out to be a clue to the identity of Adriaen van der Donck, and a tool to nudge from obscurity a man who himself helped shape American culture.

For information about the book go to: www.randomhouse.com/features/island/.