

End report Dirk Alkemade NNRC-Fulbright scholar 2022

August 3rd, 2022

Due to the pandemic, the period between my initial application for the NNRC-Fulbright scholarship and the actual stay at the NNRC, took longer than usual. I first applied for the scholarship in December 2019, which I was granted in April 2020. My original plan was to go to Albany in spring 2021. This was eventually postponed to the spring of 2022. This was all decided upon by mutual agreement. To cover all the costs for a three-month stay in Albany (May-July 2022), I secured two extra funds by Dutch organizations. The Daendels Stichting (c. \$2000) and the Prof. Van Winter Fonds (c. \$2.500). Finding a house in Albany wasn't too hard. I found something by posting a message in an Albany Facebook-group.

Work, activities & findings

As outlined in the research proposal, one of my aims was to map out materials related to Francis Adrian Van Der Kemp, a Dutch revolutionary who fled to the US in 1788 and lived in upstate New York until his death in 1829. In May and June, I have visited more than 10 archives and libraries, across three states (NY, MA and PA). This research has yielded, among other things, hundreds of letters and several unpublished manuscripts, written and received by Van Der Kemp. In May, I visited archives and libraries in Utica, Barneveld, Rochester and Buffalo. In June, trips to Boston, New York City, and Philadelphia followed. I visited archives, met with people and explored the cities.

The history of New Netherland and the legacy of the Dutch in America was largely new to me. It took some time to grasp this field, but with help of the library room of the NNRC and above all the expertise of Charles Gehring, I was able to make sense of this history. Both Charles Gehring and Marilyn Douglas used their own network put me in contact with several other specialists in the field.

Results

When venturing unto uncharted territory, historians rarely find exactly what they set out looking for. One of my main objectives was to make a general overview of the group Dutch political refugees to the US around 1800. Aside from the few migrants that were already widely known – Francis Adrian Van Der Kemp and Adam Mappa – I found information about only one other migrant – Cornelius Willem van den Heuvel. It's not ruled out that a more thorough perusal of Van Der Kemp's letters might yield another name or two. But it is, I think, safe to conclude that the group of Dutch-American migrants around 1800 was much smaller than previously imagined. The main reasons to come to the US around 1800 were the same as the centuries before: either religious or economic motives. Dutchmen with a political interest in the US, usually came here as short-time visitors, meeting with the political and diplomatic intelligentsia, making tours of the newly formed federal Republic. I plan to elaborate on these preliminary findings in an English written article, to be submitted in *New York History Journal*.

I was able to make use of some of my findings in an article that I had already started writing with a Dutch colleague, which is titled “Four Founding Fathers on the Road. New Government Design in the United States and the Netherlands, 1776-1815”. It concerns the exchange of political ideas between the Dutchmen Van Der Kemp and G.K. Van Hogendorp, and John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. This article has now been submitted and approved by the *Revue française d'études Américaines*.

In June and July, I started cataloguing and transcribing the letters and manuscripts of Van Der Kemp, something I will continue to work on in the forthcoming years. This will likely result in one or two peer-reviewed articles. I will also continue to work on the Van Der Kemp's life *before* he came to the United States. Perhaps this will one day result in a book-length biography of Van Der Kemp, ideally written in both English and Dutch.

Other activities

During my stay in Albany, there were also other obligations I had to attend to. In May and June, I had to grade papers of my students, supervise a BA-thesis and set-up new courses for the next semester. In June, I finished an article on the debate of slavery and abolition in the Netherlands around 1800. In July, I spend most of my time working on my dissertation. My stay in the US also gave me the opportunity to read up on the history of the American revolution and constitution, and the history of abolition.

Overall remarks

In the fall of 2019, I submitted a research proposal for the NNRC-Fulbright scholarship to study the experiences of Dutch political refugees that fled to the United States during the Dutch Revolution (c. 1780-1800). In early 2020 I received news that my application had been accepted, but due to a virus going around, my trip to the New Netherland Research Center in Albany, NY, was delayed until May 2022. The Fulbright organization and the NNRC were very accommodating with this delay.

Being a student of the late eighteenth century, I first expected to be slightly out of place at a research center dedicated to New Netherland, which existed in the years 1609-1664. I was happy to be proven wrong. As I have learned, the political, cultural and economic legacy of New Netherland was still very much alive around 1800. The few Dutchmen that came here as political migrants around 1800, found themselves operating within the structures of this legacy as they tried to make a livelihood.

The people at the NNRC, most notably Charles Gehring, Marilyn Douglas and Deborah Hamer, were very hospitable and made my stay a treat. They went out of their way to put me in contact with people they knew and share their knowledge and facilities. Located within the Cultural Education Center, I had the resources of the NY State Library and Archives at hand. Working in Albany placed me right in the heart of both historical expertise in this field, and of the history itself. I used my stay in Albany to venture in all directions to explore the wider “Dutch” New York region by making city-trips and hikes in the beautiful Adirondacks.

The NNRC-Fulbright scholarship gave me a great opportunity to pursue my interest in Dutch-American history around 1800.