

De Nieuw Nederlansche Mercurius



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“De Nieuw Nederlansche Mercurius”

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Events

Until January 7, 2007. The *Scheepvaartsmuseum* of Amsterdam (maritime museum) is hosting an exhibit on the 17th-century naval hero Michiel de Ruyter. With the exhibit the museum is reminding the public that 2007 will be the 400th anniversary of his birth. The exhibit not only covers De Ruyter’s career as admiral, using multi-media resources, but also demonstrates how he has been remembered over the centuries. It has been said that he is the only national figure in the Netherlands about whom nothing bad has ever been uttered. As a bonus for visitors to the museum there are two other exhibits of interest on the same floor: one on Willem Barentsz’ wintering-over on Novaya Zemlya in 1596 and another on Dutch colonies overseas, including New Netherland, of course.

Until January 10, 2007. The Bruce Museum in Greenwich, Connecticut, is hosting an exhibition of works by Jan van der Heyden (1637–1712), the greatest painter of cityscapes in the Golden Age of Dutch painting. The exhibition will next travel in a slightly abridged form to the Rijksmuseum,

Amsterdam (February 1–April 30, 2007). Go to: www.bruce-museum.com for further information.

June 7–9, 2007. “The Conference on New York History” will be held in Cooperstown, NY. Special features of the 2007 conference: Sessions intended for teachers and usable for in-service credit will be offered this year. Thursday will begin with an optional full-day workshop, “Doing Community History,” presented by the Upstate History Alliance or afternoon tours to Hyde Hall or the Iroquois Indian Museum, followed in the early evening by guided walking tours of the village or a guided cruise on the *Glimmerglass Queen*. Following the last sessions on Saturday participants may elect to spend the afternoon visiting the Farmers Museum or Hanford Mills at East Meredith, an extraordinary nineteenth-century industrial site. For more information go to: www.nyhistory.com.

Publications

If you’ve been waiting for the illustrated version of Van den Bogaert’s journey into Mohawk country you are now in luck. George O’Connor’s *Journey into Mohawk Country* is a 144 page

graphic production of the journal translated and edited by Gehring and Starna way back in 1988. The frame by frame depictions carry the translation exactly as it appears in the Syracuse Press edition. For more information go to: www.firstsecondbooks.net/mohawk.html.

Northeast Historical Archaeology has issued a publication in its series entitled *From the Netherlands to New Netherland: The Archaeology of the Dutch in the Old and New Worlds*. This special issue is identified as volume 34, 2005 and has been edited by Paul R. Huey. The seven contributions include articles by Jan Baart on cloth seals found on Iroquois sites and Gerald de Weerd on identification of the shipwreck remains found in 1916 at the World Trade Center site.

News

The *Scheepvaartsmuseum* of Amsterdam will close January 8, 2007 for major renovations. It will reopen in 2009.

Save the date: September 15, 2007 for the annual Rensselaerswijck Seminar to be held at the CEC in Albany. The theme will be “The Truce, 1609–1621.”

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Wanted

Any published information about wheelwrighting in the Netherlands and/or New Netherland in the 17th or 18th centuries, in Dutch or English. Send citations to fhfabend@msn.com. Thanks! FHF

News from the NNI

On October 21, 2006, the New Netherland Institute held a highly successful membership meeting and program at Siena College, with faculty, students, and NNI members from as far away as Vermont and Maryland in attendance. A DVD, containing NNI president Charles W. Wendell's welcome, presentations on the various aspects of the New Netherland Project's work by Director Charles Gehring, Associate Director Janny Venema, and Editor and Researcher Martha Shattuck, and a brief Q. and A., is available at \$12.00 including shipping and handling from the online shop at www.nnp.org, or by sending your order and check to the NNI office.

A delegation from the New Netherland Project and the New Netherland Institute attended the October 31st retirement ceremony of Carole Huxley, Deputy Commissioner of Cultural Education. In recognition of Commissioner Huxley's extraordinary support over many years, the Board of Trustees presented her with a gift and with the Howard G. Hageman Citation for particularly noteworthy support of the New Netherland Project. Mrs. Carol Hageman, a trustee and vice-president of Friends of New Netherland, now New Netherland Institute, presented the citation

established in her late husband's name (see www.nnp.org, in Quick Links on the home page, click Awards, then Howard G. Hageman Citation).

Quinn Foundation: The first visiting professor, Dr. Jaap Jacobs, is now teaching at Cornell University, and Noah Gelfand, the second research fellow, has begun his work at the New Netherland Project. For further details, go to www.nnp.org, select Research & Education from the drop-down menu under New Netherland Institute, and click on Doris Quinn Foundation. Use this link as well to apply for **Quinn Library and Archives Residencies** by January 15, 2007.

The Board of Trustees, through its 2009 committee, is making excellent progress in preparation of four events relating to the quadricentennial celebration of Hudson's explorations: a traveling exhibit to be shown throughout the former New Netherland area and beyond, a New Amsterdam theme exhibit in cooperation with and to be curated by the Museum of the City of New York, the completion of a documentary DVD concerning the New Netherland period and its connection with the present, and the production of a history/exhibit book highlighting the history of our shared heritage.

To honor Mr. Peter J. Paulson, former Director of the New York State Library and President of the Friends of New Netherland, a volume now in preparation, to be entitled *New Netherland Papers, 1630–1660*, will be dedicated to him. Donations to the Peter J. Paulson Fund can be made by sending your check, marked

"Paulson donation" to the NNI office or via our website at www.nnp.org (on home page, click on Peter J. Paulson for obituary; scroll down to make an online donation).

Job opening

The New Netherland Institute seeks an experienced, part-time bookkeeper, beginning no later than March 1, 2007. Hours will begin at one day per week or the equivalent, and be expanded to a minimum of 12–15 hours per week.

The possibility exists for advancement beyond the position of bookkeeper/office associate, depending on qualifications.

Candidates must be experienced in keeping financial records, which includes maintaining revenue and disbursement spread sheets. They must have general computer skills, including thorough knowledge of Excel, and the ability to learn new software quickly. They must be flexible and detail-oriented, be able to organize and work at tasks independently, and have excellent oral and written communications skills and telephone manner.

An interest in the Dutch colonial history of the United States is desirable, but not essential.

Please submit your letter of application by mail, fax, or e-mail to Dr. Elisabeth Paling Funk, chair of personnel and secretary of the Board of Trustees of the New Netherland Institute, 7 Diane Court, Katonah, NY 10536; Fax 914–232–3530; e-mail epf@hlfunk.com.

'TIS THE SEASON for Santa Claus, or *Sinterklaas*, to start

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granting wishes of all on his list! And, as December's days get shorter and colder, he can do so from the comfort of home! Since mid-October, when our new website was inaugurated, his online shopping trip will be even easier and quicker than before. Please visit at www.nnp.org. Scroll down the home page to "Support the New Netherland Project and the New Netherland Institute" and click on "online shop" to purchase unique New Netherland-related items. Isn't there someone on your list who would be delighted with a year's membership and the beautiful Pieter Goos map that is sent to every new member? Then click on "Become a Member." Or click on "books and more" to access Amazon's vast selection of books and other products. Use the windows to search Amazon for all your items, or select books from the long list below the windows for an even greater benefit to our organization. Please remember that, at no extra cost to you, the New Netherland Institute will receive a royalty on ALL your purchases throughout the year, provided you have accessed Amazon via our website. Each year, Amazon's royalty payments to the Institute bring in hundreds, which are doubled when matched by the National Endowment for the Humanities grant. May your days be merry and bright, and thank you so much for your continued support! EPF

The Annual General Meeting of the New Netherland Institute will be held on January 27, 2007 at the Pruyne House a charming 17th/18th century building, with great rooms and furnishings. It is located at 207

Old Niskayuna Road in Newtonville. Directions can be found at www.colonie.org/pruyn/#directions. The meeting will be held from 12:00 noon–3:00 pm. A buffet luncheon will be served. Cost approximately \$20.00 which includes a small donation to support NNP/NNI. The Program will consist of a business Meeting and talk by Noah Gelfand, our current Quinn Fellow, who will speak on: "Creating a Space for Themselves: Jewish Settlers in the Greater Dutch Atlantic World of the Early Modern Era."

Year-end Tax Strategies

While most people respond to our annual appeal for financial support by writing a check, consider donating stocks that have appreciated in value and that you have owned for at least one year since you acquired them. By so doing, you avoid the capital gain tax AND earn a tax deduction in most cases. This is an especially useful strategy when your portfolio contains small amounts received from spin offs for which your cost basis is difficult to determine.

If you hold shares that have decreased in value since you first bought them, sell them yourself so that you can use the loss to offset gains from other sources. Then consider donating the amount received to the NNI for a further tax deduction.

The IRS offers many ways to support NNI and lower your tax burden at the same time so why not take advantage of some? Contact Jim Sefcik, Associate for Development, at 518-783-4251 or jsefcik@mail.nysed.gov for further information.

Noah Gelfand, Quinn Fellow

Noah L. Gelfand, a PhD candidate at NYU whose dissertation is entitled "A People Within and Without: International Jewish Commerce and Community in the 17th and 18th Century Dutch Atlantic World," is the Quinn Foundation Fellow for 2006–7. His work traces connections of kin and commerce across the Dutch-Atlantic world focusing on Recife, New York, Curaçao, Surinam, and Newport.

Born in Pennsylvania, Noah grew up in Connecticut and has lived in Boston, San Francisco, and New York. His interest in history he attributes to growing up in a family with a keen interest in history and in having an excellent high school history teacher. It was while doing preliminary research for a seminar class at NYU that he discovered there was much less written about the Dutch in the Atlantic world—at least by American historians. So, he began his research by looking at Jewish merchants, who came mostly from the Iberian peninsula and who traded in Brazil, Surinam, Curaçao and other parts of the Dutch Atlantic world. Over time he's expanded his scope to include the trade connections of Jewish merchants in Newport, RI, not traditionally considered part of the Dutch Atlantic world. One of the most interesting characters he's encountered is Moses Navarro who was only 13 years old when he landed in Brazil. At the age of 18 he went out on his own to trade in Brazil before returning to Amsterdam in 1654.

Noah is an avid athlete and member of an adult ice hockey team. He enjoys concerts, movies, and traveling to urban settings and reading. He lives in NYC with his fiancé, Alicia Reitman, a design director for children's bedding with CHF Industries. Noah and Alicia plan to marry in late May. He hopes to find a teaching position for the Fall. He would like to focus on colonial American and revolutionary American history within the wider context of Atlantic world history. "The Quinn Fellowship is a great fellowship," according to Noah. "It's just for you to do research and to devote your time to study without having to teach, mark papers and do all the other things that are usually part of a fellowship."
MED

Totidem Verbis

A TRIBUTE TO A. J. F. VAN LAER

by Peter A. Douglas

Those new to the New Netherland Project may be forgiven for not being familiar with the name A.J.F. Van Laer, but his work in translating and publishing Dutch colonial manuscripts forms the significant foundation upon which the current project stands. Although he died nineteen years before the current New Netherland Project was established in 1974, he remains an early pioneer of the drive to give New Netherland its rightful place in this country's history. The first four volumes of his New York Historical Manuscript series (now called *New Netherland Documents*) "still stand as a model translation of 17th-century Dutch," wrote Charles T. Gehring, the Director of the New Netherland Project and spiritual successor of Van Laer's labors.

Arnold Johann Ferdinand Van Laer was born in Utrecht in 1869, and in his 30th year graduated from the New York State Library School in Albany. In April 1899, the State Archivist of the New York State Library died, and Van Laer was appointed sub-librarian in charge of the Manuscripts Division. Within a year his position was changed to State Archivist, a position he held until 1914 when, under a reorganization plan, he was transferred, with his title, to the office of the State Historian.

Copying and translating the Dutch records and editing them for publication became Van Laer's life work until his retirement in 1939. Being a Dutch native, and having a broad cultural education in that country, he was well qualified for the task. The State Librarian's report of 1899 makes it clear that he was just the right man for the job:

"Mr. Van Laer brings to his work a rare combination of linguistic ability, professional training, accuracy, and enthusiasm which will render his services of great value in deciphering the rich collection of Dutch manuscripts ... entrusted to his care."

Much as we speak of Charly today, in fact! Hitting a rather somber but certainly realistic note, in his first report in 1900, Van Laer wrote of the responsibility he felt for the documents and, prophetically, of their precarious future:

"Many of the Dutch records are at pres-

ent in such frail condition that any handling, however careful, puts them in danger of becoming torn and more illegible... Apart, therefore, from the danger of total destruction by fire or otherwise, always attending unique documents, it seems imperative that they should be preserved in print as soon as possible."

The huge tragedy of the Capitol fire on



March 29, 1911, was naturally a prodigious shock for Van Laer and a crushing blow to his work. He labored as hard as anyone in the chilly April weeks after the fire to locate and salvage the remains of the precious Dutch records. He dug in the dangerous ruins of the State Library, removing the burned overlay that was above the papers that had succeeded in preserving them from worse damage. Heaps of documents, burned on the surface, were frozen into black clumps, beneath which were the records he sought, charred around the margins but with much of the writing still decipherable. Van Laer personally inspected every shovelful of debris as it was removed, fearing the loss of the smallest of vital scraps. That so many documents were saved can be attributed to his knowledge of their location and appearance, as well as to his great efforts in the recovery process. His intimate acquaintance with the documents was crucial in enabling him, as no one else could have, to reconstruct the text of those that were damaged.

After the fire, Van Laer temporarily suspended his translating. The records that had survived must have presented a heart-breaking sight to him, ruined by water as they were, and scorched around the edges-damaged much as he had feared and uncannily foresaw back in 1900. The 12,000 manuscript pages now presented a far greater challenge to his skills-as they do to Charly today. The shock and distress brought about by the loss of and damage to the Dutch colonial documents, as well as the destruction of half a million books and 270,000 irreplaceable manuscripts the library held, seemed to stifle Van Laer's former energy. It would be almost a decade before he would resume his work as translator and editor of his important scholarly publications.

In 1924 the tercentenary celebration marking the construction of Fort Orange provided Van Laer with the stimulus to translate and publish the *Court Minutes of Fort Orange*, and the *Court Minutes of Albany, Rensselaerswyck, and Schenectady*. In addition to these scholarly publications, he was also inspired to write a series of essays on the history of New Netherland for distribution to schools throughout the state. These essays are available in the *Annals of New Netherland* section of the NNI's website (<http://www.nnp.org/annals>).

In her "Appreciation" to Van Laer in June 1955, following the scholar's death at the age of 86 three months before on March 25, 1955, Edna L. Jacobsen, Head of the Manuscripts and History Section of the New York State Library, wrote:

"New York State is fortunate to have had the benefit of his scholarship, and has suffered an irreparable loss in no longer having the guidance of his counsel."



Editor's note: The photograph above is the only known depiction of A.J.F. van Laer. It appeared in the *Albany Evening News* on October 12, 1932, illustrating an article relating to the tedious task of translating Dutch records.