New Netherland Matters

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In Search of Stuyvesant’s Bowery

1625, A Bad Year for the WIC

Old Bridge’s Name Recalls New Netherland’s Tribal History

History’s Home: Exploring Dutch Architecture
For more than three decades, the New Netherland Institute (NNI), an independent, non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization, has helped cast light on America’s long-neglected Dutch roots. Created in 1986 as the Friends of the New Netherland Project, NNI continues to support the work and mission of the Project’s successor, the New Netherland Research Center (NNRC). This work includes the transcription, translation, and publication of New York’s seventeenth-century Dutch colonial records and public programming, research grants, and other programs related to New Netherland and its legacy and memory. NNI supports the NNRC in partnership with the New York State Office of Cultural Education, the parent agency of the State Library, State Archives, and State Museum.

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**NEW NETHERLAND MATTERS**

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Despite the changes occurring after the American Revolution, the inclusion in this 1829 John Quidor painting of step-gabled buildings and tile roofs reveals the continuing influence of Dutch culture in the Hudson Valley. For more on the legacy of New Netherland, see David W. Voorhees’s new exhibit on our website.

We are pleased to welcome you to this first issue of New Netherland Matters, our new biannual magazine. With the retirement last year of de Nieu Nederlandse Marcurius, our print newsletter of thirty-four years, we aimed to create a full-color publication that brings readers pithy, entertaining articles on the history, legacy, and memory of the seventeenth-century Dutch colony of New Netherland. With some help from our friends, we think we’ve succeeded. So please enjoy an inaugural issue that we think nicely demonstrates a few of the many rewarding approaches to the study of New Netherland.

This issue’s first piece comes out of a talk by historical artist Len Tantillo and author Russell Shorto for our 2019 Peter Gansevoort Ten Eyck Lecture Series. In “In Search of Stuyvesant’s Bowery,” Russell and Len take the reader through the unexpected complications and contradictions they encountered while seeking the precise location of Petrus Stuyvesant’s seventeenth-century farm-house. The second piece, “1625, A Bad Year for the WIC,” by New Netherland Research Center director Dr. Charles T. Gehring, details the global designs and failures of the West India Company in 1625, four years after its founding and shortly after the Company’s colony of New Netherland saw its first permanent settlers. In the third piece, “Old Bridge’s Name Recalls Tribal History,” Peter A. Douglas takes on the controversial name change of the Nyack-to-Tarrytown bridge formerly known as the Tappan Zee and explains how this change erased a conspicuous piece of the Hudson Valley’s Dutch and Native history. Finally, in “History’s Home: Exploring Dutch Architecture,” craftsman and scholar Ian Stewart shares his insights into the architecture of Dutch New York and explains how those buildings contain the oft-overlooked remnants of human lives.

A big thanks to everyone who helped us put this issue together: Mark Schaming of the New York State Museum for offering the services of museum designer Karen Glatz, whose indispensable design assistance forms the core of this issue’s layout; Kris Fitzgerald of 2k Design for additional design help, including the cover; our authors and sponsors; the repositories who have made high-resolution images of their material available for download; and for standing behind this and other new NNI initiatives, the board of trustees of the New Netherland Institute and Janny Venema and Charly Gehring of the New Netherland Research Center.

Expect the second issue of New Netherland Matters in late summer.

Thank you for reading and for supporting the New Netherland Institute.
This investigation began because we were to give a talk on New Amsterdam at the church of St. Mark’s in-the-Bowery, in the East Village of New York City, and we wanted to root our talk in the location. One of us (Len) is a historical artist, and the other (Russell) is a writer of narrative history; we have often compared notes on our working methods and found it interesting how closely they matched. Both of us tell stories about the past in our work. Both depend on deep research to uncover elements that we then piece together into a finished project. The subject of our talk was to be that process: how each of us does what we do, with particular emphasis on recreating New Amsterdam.

St. Mark’s in-the-Bowery was built on the site of the family chapel of Peter Stuyvesant, the last director of the Dutch colony of New Netherland. It seemed appropriate to use it in some way in our presentation. Some orientation: The hub of Dutch Manhattan was the city of New Amsterdam, at the southern tip of the island. Its northern boundary was the wall built at what later became Wall Street. The road out of town, which followed the Indian trail, wound northward up the island.

About two miles north, it reached Bowery Number One, the farm that the West India Company (WIC) had set aside for the personal use of the director of the colony. Stuyvesant, when he became director, bought the land from the WIC. He had a house in New Amsterdam, where he lived with his wife and children. He also had a farmhouse here in “the bowery” (a corruption of the Dutch boerderij, or farm). The road from New Amsterdam to the farm became known in the English period as the Bowery Road.

The simple objective we set for ourselves in our talk—as a way of rooting the audience in the Dutch period—was to locate the site of Stuyvesant’s farmhouse. We reckoned it would be a straightforward task. We knew the site of the chapel, after all Russell (who used to live in the East Village) had believed that the farmhouse was just to the west...
of the chapel, along Stuyvesant Street. His presumption was that the so-called Stuyvesant Fish House on Stuyvesant Street, which was built in 1804 by Peter G. Stuyvesant, the great-grandson of the original Stuyvesant, stood on the location of the farmhouse. The task then, seemed to be to simply corroborate this fact.

We were in for some surprises. As a first step, Len overlaid the Google Maps street grid of Manhattan on the so-called Nicolls Map of 1668. This was an early map of the island commissioned by Richard Nicolls, the first English governor of New York. It was done only four years after the English takeover of New Netherland, and it showed very clearly the road leading from New Amsterdam up to a house labeled “The Governors’ that was last his Bowry”: i.e., the Stuyvesant farmhouse. With this superimposed on the current site of St. Mark’s in-the-Bowery, we saw the discrepancy at once: the farmhouse and the chapel were far apart, by maybe as much as a mile. Why would these two central structures in the family’s rural compound be placed so far from each other? The Nicolls view would have us believe that the farmhouse was located at present-day Mercer and Bleecker Streets—about a dozen blocks from St. Mark’s in-the-Bowery. Something was wrong.

Next we turned to the Ratzer Map of 1766. This was interesting because it showed a property with extensive grounds labeled “P. Stuyvesant” right on the East River shore. The P. Stuyvesant in question here was Peter G. Stuyvesant, the great-grandson of the original Stuyvesant. While St. Mark’s today is several blocks from the water’s edge, in the 17th century it did indeed sit near the water, landfill having significantly added to the width of the island. The “P. Stuyvesant” property didn’t correspond to the location of the church, but it was near it, and the geography suggested a natural relationship: there was a broad east-west lane from the Bowery Lane (i.e., Fourth Avenue) to the property, which seemed to sit on a promontory over the river. The chapel was just to the southwest, connected by its own path to the Bowery Lane.

Could this have been the site of Stuyvesant’s farmhouse? It made geographic sense. Would the director of New Netherland not have wanted his country estate to sit on such a promontory, looking over the East River and across it to Breuckelen? Water was the means of transport; goods could easily be shipped to and from New Amsterdam and elsewhere in the colony. The broad lane to it would not have been only for show but a practical path for wagons hauling produce to the shore.

As we explored, we couldn’t help but wonder about the appearance of the building. Determining the appearance of the original Stuyvesant house or any of its ancillary farm structures is problematic. The most promising image with the greatest credibility appeared in an 1831 article in the New York Mirror, describing the original Stuyvesant mansion as “still standing.” The article included an engraving that depicted a dilapidated building sitting precariously atop a pile of rock and earth. A portion of the first floor had collapsed, leaving the corner rooms of the second floor hanging out in space. The article stated that the building was constructed of “bricks painted yellow” (perhaps the writer was unaware that the Dutch produced yellow bricks in the 17th century). The land on all four sides of the house had been dug away and used as fill for the expansion of the East River shoreline, leaving the house exposed on its lonely perch.
Noted artist Benson J. Lossing wrote and illustrated a volume entitled, *The Hudson, from the Wilderness to the Sea*, Virtue & Yorston, New York, 1866. In it he describes Stuyvesant’s dwelling on his “Bowerie estate” as being built of yellow brick imported from Holland. The line drawing of the house he included depicts a three bay, two story, gambrel-roofed, Dutch style house sitting high above the river, atop and near the edge of a jagged cliff. It is obviously derived from the 1831 newspaper engraving. Lossing, however, incorrectly interprets the collapsed corner in the engraved image as a cantilevered second story.

Subsequent drawings by other artists illustrate essentially the same design minus the extreme promontory siting. A few of these renditions follow Lossing’s unfounded idea of an over-hanging second floor.

Further confusing the issue, a later 19th-century magazine presents the house and its gardens, docks, seawall, Dutch-attired figures, and even passing ships in the river and titles the piece, “Gov. Stuyvesant’s House, Erected 1658, Afterwards Called, “The Whitehall.” The term “Whitehall” is also applied to the residence of Director General Stuyvesant at the tip of Manhattan. It is clearly shown on the Castello Plan, identified in Stokes *Iconography of Manhattan* as “Whitehall,” and later depicted and identified as “The Ruines of Whitehall…” by William Burgis on his 1717 watercolor of Manhattan. That large three-story, bell-gabled, stately structure bears no resemblance whatsoever to the Stuyvesant farmhouse. It is possible that both

great compiler of historical information about Manhattan. In his *Iconography of Manhattan Island*, Stokes devotes some space not to the location of Stuyvesant’s farmhouse but to the farmhouse built and occupied by his predecessors, Peter Minuit and Wouter van Twiller. According to an inventory dated 1639, the “trefelyck” (i.e., very fine) house at Bowery Number 1 was built by Van Twiller, as were a barn, boathouse, and brewery.

Stokes locates this property quite precisely: “in the area now bounded by 15th and 16th Streets, First Avenue and Avenue A.” When Len superimposed the Ratzer Map onto the Google Maps street plan, the Stuyvesant property fell at this very spot. Appropriately enough, that location today is within the housing complex of Stuyvesant Town. The developers of that complex surely took the name from Peter G. Stuyvesant, who, as heir to the property originally bought by his great-grandfather, owned and developed 60 acres of lower
The West India Company (WIC) did not have the same auspicious beginning as did its elder sibling, the East India Company (VOC). At its founding in 1602, people from all walks of life, from wealthy merchants to barmaids, invested in VOC shares as soon as they were offered on the Amsterdam stock exchange. The Company was capitalized almost overnight. This wave of enthusiasm had been fueled by several fleets returning with exotic wonders of the Far East: spices, silk, ceramics, and more. Everyone wanted to get in on the action with the chance to make some money off the success of the VOC. On the other hand, the West India Company was founded not as a commercial enterprise but as an instrument of war. Its primary mission was to carry on the Dutch Republic's war of independence from the Habsburg Empire after the expiration of the Twelve Years’ Truce in 1621. The Dutch populace faced the prospect of more death and destruction. The enthusiasm that the VOC had thrived on was simply not there for the WIC.

In 1622, shortly after the resumption of hostilities, troops of the Habsburg Empire laid siege to Bergen op Zoom in Zeeland. Although the attack on this port city was a major distraction in the Netherlands, the WIC was able to score a victory with the seizure of Salvador da Bahia in Brazil in 1624. It was the primary mission of the WIC to do as much damage as possible to Spanish Habsburg interests abroad in order to divert resources supporting the armies attacking the homeland. Salvador was a major port for the shipment of sugar to Europe and the port of arrival for slaves from Africa. Spain responded at once with a force of 22 ships and 4,000 men.

The combined Spanish-Portuguese fleet entered the Bay of All Saints on March 29, 1625. The following day the 4,000 men were landed. Attempts to break the siege by counterattack and a blockade by fireships all failed. On May 1, the Dutch surrendered nearly 2,000 soldiers and six ships, in addition to large quantities of guns and gunpowder. Several days after the surrender, Admiral Boudewijn Hendricksz, commanding a WIC fleet of 33 ships, appeared in the bay, carrying supplies and reinforcements for the Salvador garrison. However, Hendricksz saw that he was being lured into a trap and returned to open waters.

Half of Hendricksz’s force was under the command of Vice Admiral Andries Veron. After the failure to
relieve Salvador, Hendrickz decided to split the fleet. Veron would sail east to team up with Admiral Jan Dircksz Lam, who had orders to take the Portuguese castle of Elmina on the Gold Coast of Africa at present day Ghana. Hendrickz would sail north to attack San Juan, Puerto Rico, and its fort, El Morro. Both objectives were key to Spanish interests in the Atlantic.

In late August, Hendrickz arrived at the island of St. Vincent, where he tended to his ships and the many sick among his crew. After surviving a hurricane with the loss of only one vessel, Hendrickz’s 17 remaining ships arrived at Puerto Rico on September 24. Hendrickz sailed past El Morro into the bay, suffering only minor casualties. The next day he led 800 soldiers ashore into an abandoned city. The Dutch dug siege trenches and installed cannon on a hill to bombard the fort. Several weeks of trading cannon fire, attacks and counter attacks were followed by Dutch threats to burn the city if the Spanish did not surrender El Morro. The mayor of San Juan, veteran military commander Juan de Haro, met each threat with derision.

On October 21, De Haro was given one more chance to surrender. Rebuffed once again, the Dutch torched the city. One hundred houses and the palace, library, and archives were set ablaze. For two weeks, Hendrickz refined plans to evacuate and run the gauntlet out of the bay, past Spanish guns along the shore and in El Morro. On November 2, his fleet managed to reach the open sea with only minor casualties and the loss of one ship, the 30-gun Medemblik. However, Hendrickz didn’t leave empty-handed. Among the booty gleaned from smoldering San Juan were nine bells. According to Wassenaer’s chronicle, they were to be hung in a tower under construction on Manhattan. Unfortunately, we have no further reference to their fate.

The defeats at Salvador and San Juan were bad; considerable manpower and treasure were lost in both aborted operations. However, the worst was yet to come. If you are reading this to small children, you might want to put them to bed now.

When we last left Andries Veron, he had just set sail to find Jan Dircksz Lam off the coast of Africa. On August 26, Veron found Lam in the waters near Sierra Leone. Their combined force came to 13 ships. After two months of repairing and resupplying, they anchored off Elmina. Twelve hundred soldiers were landed a distance from the fortified castle, which had only a light garrison. However, the Dutch were unaware that the Portuguese governor, Dom Francisco Soutomaior, knew that the secret to a good defense was a bold offense. Instead of waiting for an attack on the castle and the inevitable siege, he hid a large number of loyal Africans in the nearby woods. As an incentive, he offered a reward for each enemy head brought to him. Just before dark on October 25, the African force attacked the soldiers, who were relaxing on the beach before launching their attack. The result was total surprise, and
Admiral Piet Heyn (1577–1629) is so famous that a song about his capture of the Spanish silver fleet in 1628 is sung at most soccer games.

Crispijn van de Passe (I), artist, 1624

panic ensued. Veron, his officers, and a few soldiers died fighting, but the rest offered little resistance. The entire force would have been decapitated if it hadn’t been for the Africans’ desire for the soldiers’ white clothing. Many escaped during the time it took for each soldier to remove his clothing to avoid blood stains while being beheaded. Still, 442 headless soldiers were left lying on the beach. Before withdrawing, aboard their ships the Dutch survivors fired 2,000 cannonballs at Elmina Castle.

Alexander van der Capellen, the representative of the province of Gelderland in the States General in 1625, wrote in his memoirs that what happened in Brazil, Puerto Rico, and Africa was a “nasty knock” for the WIC. He seemed to be able to console himself by musing that although the Dutch had lost a lot, the king of Spain had also suffered severely. However, as a result of its losses, the WIC temporarily suspended major operations against the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Atlantic theater.

As a footnote, it is worth mentioning that it wasn’t just the WIC that suffered in this year. On April 23, the United Provinces mourned the loss of Prince Maurits, political leader and commander of Dutch forces, while the fishing industry suffered the loss of 85 herring boats, or 10 percent of the fleet, to pirates in the North Sea. Last but not least, on June 2, after a yearlong siege, the strategic city of Breda was surrendered to Spanish troops. However, as depressing as 1625 must have been, good fortune was on the horizon. Piet Heyn was still in the Caribbean hunting for the Spanish silver fleet. In two years, WIC investors would see their stock soar to unimagined heights.

Sources:


Old Bridge’s Name Recalls Tribal History

by Peter A. Douglas

The opening of the new Tappan Zee Bridge (officially renamed the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge) in September 2018 can be seen as yet another reminder of the Dutch history of the Hudson Valley. The “Zee” component of the name is clearly Dutch, meaning “sea,” as in the Zuider Zee, or southern sea, in the Netherlands. But what does Tappan mean, and why is part of a river called a sea?

To the Dutch in the seventeenth century, this stretch of the Hudson (the Noort Rivier, or North River, to them) did indeed seem something like a sea because at this point, around ten miles north of Manhattan, there is a widening of the river. This broad “sea” is about three and a half miles across at its widest point near Haverstraw Bay, and runs for a dozen miles between Rockland and Westchester counties, extending from Irvington in the south to Croton-on-Hudson in the north.

The original Tappan Zee Bridge, built from 1952–55, joined the communities of Nyack in the west and Tarrytown in the east. There were concerns about the structural integrity of the sixty-year-old bridge, and construction began on the new bridge in 2013, running a few yards to the north of the existing bridge and parallel to it.

The word Tappan in the bridge’s name, and that of the river’s natural widening, comes from the name of a sub-tribe of the Munsee-speaking Algonquin tribe, an indigenous people of the northeastern woodlands, whose historical territory included present-day New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania along the Delaware River, New York City, western Long Island, and the Lower Hudson Valley. The name is thought to derive from the Algonquin language as used by New Netherland settlers, who spelled it Tappaen. A possible origin is the word tuphanne, meaning “cold water.”

The tribe’s first contact with the Dutch settlers was as trading partners. It is from them, for instance, that David Pieterszoon de Vries (ca. 1593–1655), a...
navigator from Hoorn who was earlier involved in the Swanendael colony in Delaware, purchased 500 acres of land in 1640 and built Vriessendael in what is now Edgewater, New Jersey, the first known homestead in Bergen County, where he raised cattle and grew corn and tobacco.

The name Tappan occurs throughout the tribe’s former territory. Vriessendael, the patroonship on the west bank of the Hudson, was also known as Tappan. We see it in Lake Tappan, a reservoir created by the Tappan Dam on the Hackensack River. We find it again in Old Tappan in Bergen County, and in Tappan in the town of Orangetown, Rockland County.

In 1994, the name of New York Governor Malcolm Wilson was added to the Tappan Zee Bridge’s name ... though his name was almost never used when the bridge was spoken about colloquially. It was just the Tappan Zee Bridge.

In June 2017, Governor Andrew Cuomo was successful in passing legislation to name the bridge after his father, former Governor Mario Cuomo (1932–2015). This controversial decision has been met with stiff criticism. A poll of Rockland and Westchester county residents found that only fifteen percent of respondents were in favor of the change, the majority preferring to keep the old name and thereby its local historical associations. This surge of disapproval is reflected in a huge petition against the renaming, and in an Assemblyman’s promise to introduce legislation to revert to the bridge’s old name. The petition’s creator, Dr. Monroe Mann of Port Chester, New York said “The name Tappan Zee has no politics associated with it.” He goes on to say that the old name “properly recognizes the true founders of this land: the Tappan Indians and the Dutch. Most importantly, we should not recognize the contributions of one in history by destroying a memorial to another.”

If somehow returned to life, the ancient tribe could only marvel at the sight of the new bridge. And in their wonder they surely would be gratified to know that, in a resilient and democratic fashion, and despite an unpopular bureaucratic fiat from Albany, the many millions of travelers on I-87 and I-287 will still know and call it by its old name, their name: Tappan Zee.
History’s Home: Exploring Dutch Architecture

by Ian Stewart

When writing the history of New Netherland, historians generally turn to surviving remnants of the written word. They reason that archival records are our most tangible link to the past and allow us to study those details that people deemed worthy enough to write down. While these records do indeed give us fascinating insights into the comings and goings of the people of New Netherland, there are other, often overlooked sources that can be just as illuminating as any receipt or court document.

The first are the personal belongings and ordinary objects of daily life, which are usually the domain of archaeologists and historians of material culture. These objects can reveal things like trade preferences, economic patterns, and cultural exchange. As a dedicated field, archaeology is relatively new. While it has existed in some form for several centuries, it only truly developed into a discipline in the last 100 or so years. The study of material culture history is even newer, having found its stride in the 1960s with the work of luminaries like Henry Glassie. Both disciplines generally deal with smaller objects: things that can be curated within a museum and that had been previously overlooked, or as James Deetz laid out in the title of his 1977 seminal work, *In Small Things Forgotten*.

But as valuable as they are in revealing the history of North America’s Dutch communities, too narrow a focus on the these small objects and manuscripts can lead us to overlook things that are just as revealing: the buildings left behind by the citizens of New Netherland and later by the Dutch denizens of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont. As someone who not only researches New Netherland but also restores these buildings, I have come to have a deep and abiding affection for these oft-overlooked remnants of our Dutch past. I don’t write here merely to rationalize my love of these buildings but to argue for their proper place among invaluable repositories for the study of New Netherland and Dutch New York.
This is of course not to say that these buildings have been ignored, but they have been examined primarily through a lens that foregrounds style and form. Instead, I ask that we consider these buildings separate from style, as records of human lives lived.

When I first look over a building, it is with the eye of an architectural conservator seeking signs of degradation and decay. But the more I look, the more the building reveals its history. For example, the characteristics of the nails and timbers can reveal much about the building's age and the lives of its inhabitants. If the timber was not native to the area, this could be a clue that the original owners were relatively wealthy, which I find from time to time. Other details tell me about the home's builders. Examining the marks left on the timbers, for instance, can tell me if the hewer was right or left handed and what type of axe he used. Through these details, I can, in essence, reach out over the centuries and discover things about those lives that were never recorded in any ledger or record book.

I have been fortunate to work on or record many of these historic structures, including such notable examples as the Jean Hasbrouck House in New Paltz, the Luykas Van Alen House in Kinderhook, and most recently the Van Ostrand/Radliffe House in Albany. Many more remain unexamined.

Last summer, the owners of a house near where I live in Columbia County, New York invited me to take a look at their home. To my knowledge it was unrecorded; though the owners said that a tour had once gone through many years ago. I had walked past it for years and was sure that the house was Dutch, but I couldn't be sure until I got inside.

As I entered and walked through an addition and into the original part of the house, I was treated to a view of a perfectly articulated Dutch timber frame. The owners had made changes but had saved the remnants, including the paint on one of the walls. That is where I saw it: the unmistakable outline of a moulding around a jambless fireplace, now long ago removed. I could picture the small structure, approximately 20' by 20', a story and a half high, likely built in the first decades of the eighteenth century when the modest house was still a single room. As I examined more of the house, it told me more of its story. Builders had extended the frame by another sixteen feet and added a room just beyond the original jambless gable. The well-executed hewing on the _tussenbalken_ or tie beams suggested that the builder had a high level of competency. I could see that more additions to the home came in the nineteenth century.

What a moment: to see the ghost of the mouldings, the work of the hewer's right hand, and the joinery cut in a Dutch fashion with no seeming English influence. In that moment I felt as connected with New Netherland as I do when I hold parchment, paper, pipe, or tile. I encourage you to look closer at one of these buildings when you get the chance, and see what it can tell you about the lives it once contained.
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