

# De Nieuw Nederlansche Mercurius



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“De Nieuw Nederlansche Mercurius”

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## Events of Interest

**Until June 5, 2016.** “Van Dyck: The Anatomy of Portraiture.” The most comprehensive exhibition on Anton van Dyck as a portraitist to be shown in the United States in over twenty years. Anton van Dyck (1599-1641), one of the most celebrated and influential portraitists of all time, enjoyed an international career that took him from his native Flanders to Italy, France, and, ultimately, the court of Charles I in London. For more information go to: [www.frick.org/exhibitions](http://www.frick.org/exhibitions).

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**June 23-26, 2016.** The 22nd annual Omohundro Institute Conference will convene in Worcester, MA. Hosted by Worcester Polytechnic Institute and the American Antiquarian Society, the conference’s twin themes will be “Native American Transformations” and “Early America at Work.” Although no specific program material is yet available, we do know the following: a panel proposal entitled: “Transforming the Eastern Woodlands: Native-European Encounters in the Dutch Colony of New Netherland,” by our Emerging Scholars, has been

accepted. The panel will consist of the following speakers: Stephen Staggs, Nicholas Cunigan, and Erin Kramer. The session will be moderated by Danny Noorlander with comments offered by Mark Meuwese. In a separate panel Dennis Maika will present his own new scholarly work: “The Struggle for New Amsterdam’s Slave Trade: A Contest Between Regional Market Opportunities, West India Company Policy, and Private Entrepreneurship.” For more information go to: [oieahc.wm.edu/conferences](http://oieahc.wm.edu/conferences).

## Publications

Both of the following books will be hot-off-the-press and available for purchase at our annual Seminar in September:

*The Dutch Moment in Atlantic History: War, Trade, and Settlement in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World* by Wim Klooster (Cornell University Press, September 2016).

In the 17th century, the Dutch built an Atlantic empire that stretched from the United Provinces to the Hudson River and Brazil and from the Caribbean to Angola and the African Gold Coast. This

empire was forged on the battlefield, as Dutch armies and fleets extended the decades-old independence war against Spain across the ocean.

*The Dutch Moment* is the first book to cover this empire in all its complexity, and is original in its focus on soldiers and sailors, the emphasis on violence as instrumental in the creation and maintenance of the Dutch Atlantic, and its treatment of the Dutch Atlantic as both an empire and a realm in which the Dutch routinely crossed imperial boundaries.

The pivotal colony in the Dutch Atlantic was Brazil, half of which was conquered by the Dutch West India Company. Its brief lifespan notwithstanding, Dutch Brazil had a lasting impact on the Atlantic world. Brazil launched the Dutch into the transatlantic slave trade, a business they soon dominated, and also paved the way for a Jewish life in freedom in the Americas. In the end, the entire colony eventually reverted to Portuguese rule, in part because Dutch soldiers, plagued by perennial poverty, famine, and misery, refused to take up arms. As elsewhere, the Dutch lost a crucial colony because of the systematic

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neglect of the very soldiers upon whom the empire's defenses rested.

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*The Pinkster King and the King of Kongo: The Forgotten History of America's Dutch-Owned Slaves*, by Jeroen Dewulf. (University of Mississippi Press, September 2016).

This book presents the history of the nation's forgotten Dutch slave community and free Dutch-speaking African-Americans from 17th-century New Amsterdam to 19th-century New York and New Jersey. It also develops a provocative new interpretation of one of America's most intriguing black folkloric traditions, Pinkster. Dewulf rejects the traditional interpretation of this celebration of a "slave king" as a form of carnival. Instead, he shows that it is a ritual rooted in mutual-aid and slave brotherhood traditions. By placing Pinkster in an Atlantic context, Dewulf identifies striking parallels to royal election rituals in slave communities elsewhere in the Americas, which he relates to the ancient Kingdom of Kongo and the historical impact of Portuguese culture in West-Central Africa.

Whereas the importance of African-American fraternities providing mutual-aid has long been acknowledged for the post-slavery era, Dewulf's focus on the social capital of slaves traces concern for mutual-aid back to 17th-century Manhattan. He suggests a stronger impact of Manhattan's first slave community on the development of African-American identity in New York and New Jersey than has hitherto been assumed.

While the earliest historians working on slave culture in a North American context were mainly interested in an assumed process of assimilation according to European standards, later generations pointed out the need to look for indigenous African continuities. The findings of this book suggest the necessity to complement the latter with an increased focus on the contact Africans had with European—primarily Portuguese—culture before they were shipped as slaves to the Americas.

### News

From the "New Holland Foundation Newsletter" December 2015: For the "Forts Project," where the aim is an overview of all Dutch fortifications worldwide, researcher Lodewijk Hulsman finished his report on Brazil this year. In Dutch archives he traced forgotten documents and maps concerning the building methods and backgrounds of the former engineers of these military works in the Tropics. For the North American part of the 'Forts Project' historian Jaap Jacobs finished his research on Dutch fortifications, as part of the *Atlas of Dutch North America*. In cooperation with the New Netherland Institute, Jacobs did thorough work in archives in the Netherlands and the U.S.A., where he found new and useful information for future archaeological research and conservation. The two reports have become greatly informative and for the first time an overview of the Dutch fortifications in Brazil (c. 1585-1654) and North

America (1614-1676) is presented. Reports are both published on the NHF-website: <http://bit.ly/22nugaK>

### NNI News

Annual Meeting and Luncheon: Sat. May 21st 10:00 am–3:00 pm First Presbyterian Church, 34 Broadway, Rensselaer, NY 12144. The meeting, luncheon, and talk will take place in the church followed by an opportunity to visit the "Slavery Exhibit" (see last issue of Mercurius) at Crailo Historic Site, which is just a block from the church. The business meeting will include introduction of new board members, an update from the NYS Archives on the digitization project, and an update from the NNRC director. The featured speaker at this year's meeting will be Susanah Shaw Romney, author of *New Netherland Connections: Intimate Networks and Atlantic Ties in 17th-Century America*, the 2013 Hendricks Award winner. The title of her talk will be "Housewives and Businesswomen: Changing how we think about Dutch women in the Atlantic World."

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"Pavonia aka New Jersey et al. A Historical Perspective" (working title) is the theme of the 39th New Netherland Seminar. The seminar will include three parts: two relating to NJ's colonial and state history, the third relating to New Netherland in general. The Seminar will be held at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, NJ. The seminar and its companion events will take place

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over three days, beginning on Thursday, the 22nd of September and concluding on Saturday the 24th. In addition to the two-day conference, there will be a reception Thursday evening and the New Netherland dinner on Friday evening. Relevant tours are being planned.

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The NNI Nominating Committee is looking for members who may be interested in serving on the Board of Trustees. In particular the Institute could use members that have knowledge and expertise in law and/or public relations, though there are no prerequisites. Board meetings are held four times per year, with most meetings taking place in Albany, New York. The NNI currently has Board members from as far away as Delaware, Virginia, and Illinois!

Please consider lending your time and talent to our worthy organization by serving as a Trustee. Visit our web site to learn more about us and if you think you might be interested in serving on the Board of the New Netherland Institute, E. James Schermerhorn (Jim) [schermerhornej@verizon.net](mailto:schermerhornej@verizon.net), Nominations Committee Chair, looks forward to hearing from you.

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Alice P. Kenney Award : Applications due April 15, 2016. This grant now enables the Institute to award an annual prize of \$5,000 to an individual or group that has made a significant contribution to colonial Dutch studies and/or has encouraged understanding of the significance of the Dutch colonial experience in North America by

research, teaching, writing, speaking, or in other ways. For more information: [bit.ly/1Vfv8IX](http://bit.ly/1Vfv8IX)

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Five episodes of our podcast “New Netherland *Praatjes*,” hosted by Russell Shorto are now available on our site: Charles Gehring, James Bradley, Len Tantillo, Susanah Romney, and Jeroen Dewulf. Four more have been recorded, with three of them edited and in line for posting: Janny Venema, Dennis Maika, Paul Huey, and Firth Fabend. Go to: [bit.ly/1Xxzmuj](http://bit.ly/1Xxzmuj)

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NNRC Student Scholar in Residence Research Grant: Applications are due May 15, 2016. The New Netherland Research Center (NNRC), a joint endeavor of the New Netherland Institute (NNI) and the Office of Cultural Education, New York State Education Department (NYSED/OCE), with financial support from the Government of the Netherlands, announces the next NNRC Student Scholar in Residence Research Grant. The grant covers a period of up to three months in residence and provides a stipend of \$5,000. More information: [bit.ly/22p7yLO](http://bit.ly/22p7yLO)

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The NNI is pleased to announce that the following project supported by the Dutch Culture USA Program (sponsored by the Consulate General of the Netherlands in NY) is underway: “Creating and Publishing a Guide to the Engel Sluiter Collection at the Bancroft Library, University of California.” The Engel Sluiter historical

documents collection at the UC Berkeley Bancroft Library is an accumulation of research notes and transcriptions of historical documents from archives throughout Europe and Latin America, made between approximately 1930-2001 by Engel Sluiter, former Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley and Dutch native. The collection consists of 98 boxes of these notes and transcriptions, estimated in excess of 160,000 pages, including photocopies of documents and other written works. While the collection is summarized as relating to “17th-century Dutch Iberian global rivalry,” subjects range from Dutch, English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese voyages to the Americas, imperial finances between the later 16th- and first half of the 17th-centuries, Dutch voyages during the early 17th century, shipping records, the Dutch presence in North America, the Caribbean and Brazil, the transatlantic slave trade, the Newfoundland fisheries, and the Dutch Arctic exploration and whaling. This wealth of information pertaining to the 16th to 17th century period of European exploration and conquest includes many copies of primary and secondary sources. Those written in Dutch, Spanish, French, or Portuguese are often accompanied by short transcriptions in English and sometimes by English translations.

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In addition to the above project, the *Nationaal Archief* is funding the digitization of the remaining 9,500

documents in the New York Colonial Document Series, which represents the earliest documentary history of New Netherland.

This corpus of material, together with the transcriptions, all of which have been completed, and the translations to date, will provide an enormous body of material. When completed, the proposed digitization will be a major step towards making the 17th-century Dutch colonial records in the collections of the NYSA and the NYSL accessible for study and research. The digitization will additionally provide a model for similar efforts towards collections of original records in other member states and countries in the Mutual Cultural Heritage Program.

The Society of Daughters of Holland Dames is funding a project assistant grant to prepare the metadata component of making the remaining 9,500 documents in the New York State Archives collection of 12,000 pages of the New York Colonial Document Series available to the public online.

### **Totidem Verbis**

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The Dutch in the Arctic: Willem Barentsz and the Quest for the Northeast Passage  
by Peter A. Douglas

Starting in the 15th century the colonial and maritime nations of Europe were consumed by the need to find a faster navigable route to the trading nations of Asia. Voyages to the Far East followed the long, costly, and dangerous routes that took the ships just to the north of the wild Southern

Ocean, either by way of uttermost South America or the distant tip of Africa. Most Dutch ships sailing from Texel to the Indies (around 15,000 miles) took about eight months, and while the most fortunate might make the journey in 130 or so days, it was not unknown for East Indiamen to get blown off course in storms or be becalmed for weeks or months, while facing all the other hazards of extended ocean travel.

Many of the early attempts to find a shortcut to the Indies were east to west, through the Davis Strait by Greenland and Baffin Island and via the Hudson Strait into Hudson Bay. Thus we usually think of that elusive route to Asia as the “Northwest Passage,” a channel to the north of the American continent through the Arctic archipelago of what would become Canada. There was, however, also the quest for the “Northeast Passage,” an Arctic Ocean route to the Pacific to the north of Norway and Siberia.

The first name associated with the Northeast Passage is that of the Englishman Hugh Willoughby. Sponsored by a group of London merchants, Willoughby sailed in May 1553 as captain of the *Bona Esperanza* with two other ships under his command. The weather forced two of the ships to lose contact with the third, and Willoughby and the other vessel continued around the top of Norway, making it to the 600-mile long crescent of Novaya Zemlya (New Land) in August, the first western Europeans to do so. The year being far spent, they elected to winter over in that region, but no one survived the ordeal, and Russian fishermen found the two ships, with all aboard dead, the following year.

Various attempts were made by the bold sailors of several countries to find the northeastern opening to the Indies, including Henry Hudson, who led two Arctic expeditions in 1607 and 1608, shortly before his North American discoveries that led to the creation of New Netherland. While none of the endeavors was successful, new islands were identified and knowledge of the Arctic coastlines was refined for the eager mapmakers.

Notable among these early explorers was the Dutchman Willem Barentsz, born on the West Frisian Island of Terschelling around 1550. Barentsz led three expeditions into Arctic waters in search of Cathay and points east. The first of these left Texel in the summer of 1594, with Barentsz aboard the *Mercury* along with two other ships. They reached the west coast of Novaya Zemlya and followed it northward before ice fields forced them to turn back. However, Cornelis Nay in *De Zwaan* passed through the Kara Strait into the Kara Sea, the open water giving false hope that the route had been found. Another attempt was made the following year, but little was achieved. The expedition left late and encountered too much ice for them to enter the Kara Sea.

A third and more important expedition set off in May 1596, though this was not financed by the States General, the Dutch government, for they were disappointed by the lack of success of the other missions and would no longer subsidize such exploits. This time it was the city of Amsterdam that outfitted two ships under the command of Barentsz and captained by Jan Corneliszoon Rijp and Jacob van Heemskerck. [*to be continued*]