

De Nieu Nederlandse Mercurius



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June 2014

Events of interest

June 10, 2014. The New Amsterdam History Center Lecture Series presents a discussion of the book, *The Worlds of the Seventeenth Century Hudson Valley*, with its editors Jaap Jacobs, University of St. Andrews, and L.H. Roper, SUNY, New Paltz; moderated by Dennis Maika, NNI. 6:00–8:00 at the Consulate–General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 666 Third Ave., 19th fl., NYC; followed by Q & A and reception. RSVP by June 7th to Ashley Nemeth at: anemeth@collegiatechurch.org.

June 12–14, 2014. The 35th Conference on New York State History will be hosted by Marist College in Poughkeepsie, NY. The Conference is an annual meeting of academic and public historians, librarians and archivists, educators, publishers, and other interested individuals. The New York State Historical Association sponsors the Conference in collaboration with the New York State Archives Partnership Trust and New York State Museum. It is also sponsored by the Hudson River Valley Institute.

For further information and registration go to: www.nysha.org/cnysh.

June 19, 2014. From Amsterdam to Albany: an address by Russell Shorto, the 2013 New Netherland Research Center Senior Scholar and author of *The Island at the Center of the World* and *Amsterdam: A History of the World's Most Liberal City*, as well as other acclaimed works. He will talk about Dutch cultural heritage from Amsterdam and its influence on Albany, NY.

The talk will be followed by a signing of his most recent book *Amsterdam: A History of the World's Most Liberal City*, named one of Publisher's Weekly Best Books of 2013 and has been described as “an expertly told history of a city of new, shocking freedoms and the tough-minded people that developed them.” Copies of the book will be available for sale.

Russell Shorto's research with the New Netherland Research Center has focused on following several families from New Netherland through early American history and exploring their paths during the American Revolution. He is a contributing writer for the *New*

York Times Magazine and former director of the John Adams Institute in Amsterdam. Mr. Shorto's books have won several literary prizes including the New York City Book Award, the Washington Irving Prize, and the New York Public Library Award. In 2009 he received a knighthood from the Dutch government for advancing Dutch–American Relations.

The talk will begin at 6:00 pm in the Huxley Theater at the Cultural Education Center in the Empire State Plaza.

The event is sponsored by the Friends of the New York State Library and co-sponsored by the New York State Library. It is free and open to the public.

September 13, 2014. “Negotiating the Surrender of New Amsterdam: A Role–Playing Workshop for Teachers on the 350th Anniversary of the English Invasion of New Netherland, August–September 1664.”

Using primary sources and character profiles, teachers will assume the roles of major players in the 1664 surrender of New Amsterdam and participate in specifically designed activities to develop an understanding of this

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critical event in New York history. The materials and activities can be adopted or adapted for classroom use and would benefit teachers of 7th grade Social Studies, 11th grade American History, AP American History and AP World History.

The event will be held at SUNY New Paltz 9 am–12 pm. Refreshments will be provided in the morning, lunch at the end of activities. Led by Jaap Jacobs (St. Andrews University, Scotland), Dennis J. Maika (New Netherland Institute), and Lou Roper (SUNY New Paltz), the workshop is sponsored by the New Netherland Institute, SUNY New Paltz, and Ulster County BOCES. Certification for Professional Development hours will be provided by Ulster County BOCES.

September 20, 2014. The NNI announces its 37th New Netherland Seminar, which will take place in the Huxley Theater of the Cultural Education Center in Albany, NY. The program will commemorate the 400th anniversary of the construction of Fort Nassau on Castle Island (now the port of Albany). “1614” will feature five speakers, who will place the Dutch trading post in its historical context as well as offer arguments for its probable location on the island.

The Speakers:

L.F. Tantillo (Historical Artist): “Fort Nassau (Albany, NY), 1614: An Architectural Interpretation of its Location and Appearance.”

William Starna (Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, State University

of New York College at Oneonta; NEH Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Humanities, Hartwick College): “Truths and Consequences in American Indian–Dutch Affairs—The View from 1614”.

Willem Frijhoff (Erasmus Chair for Humanities, Erasmus University Rotterdam): “Jacob Eelkens Revisited: A Young Franco–Dutch Entrepreneur in the New World.”

Leslie Choquette (French Institute, Assumption College): “1614: The View from New France.”

Jeremy Bangs (Director, Leiden American Pilgrim Museum, Leiden, The Netherlands): “What were the English up to?”

Books of Interest

The Anatomy Lesson: A novel by Nina Siegal. Set in one day in 1632, *The Anatomy Lesson* is a stunning portrayal of Golden Age Amsterdam and a brilliantly imagined back-story to Rembrandt’s first great work of art. Told from several points of view, ranging from a curio dealer who collects bodies for the city’s chief anatomist to philosopher Rene Descartes, the novel opens on the morning of the medical dissection that is to be recorded by the twenty-six-year-old artist from Leiden who has yet to attach his famous signature to a painting. As the story builds to its dramatic and inevitable conclusion, the events that transpire throughout the day sway Rembrandt to make fundamental changes to his initial composition. These changes will remain mysteries for centuries until

a young art historian closely examines the painting in the twenty-first century, and makes surprising discoveries about the painter, his process, and his genius for capturing enduring truths about human nature in a single moment.

Powell’s Books is selling the 288 page novel in hardcover for \$17.95.

Holland, Michigan: From Dutch Colony to Dynamic City by Robert P. Swierenga, in three volumes, is a fresh and comprehensive history of the city of Holland from its beginnings to the increasingly diverse community it is today. The three volumes discuss such topics as the coming of the Dutch, the Americans who chose to live among them, schools, grassroots politics, the effects of the world wars and the great depression, city institutions, downtown renewal, and social and cultural life in Holland. Robert Swierenga also draws attention to founder Albertus van Raalte’s particular role in forming the city--everything from planning streets to establishing churches and schools, nurturing industry, and encouraging entrepreneurs. Lavishly illustrated with nine hundred photographs and based on meticulous research, these volumes offer the most detailed history of Holland, Michigan, in print. These books may be purchased through the Hope–Geneva Bookstore at Hope College. Call: 800-946-4673 or email: bookstore@hope.edu. Major credit cards are accepted.

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Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century by Geoffrey Parker. Revolutions, droughts, famines, invasions, wars, regicides – the calamities of the mid-seventeenth century were not only unprecedented, they were agonizingly widespread. A global crisis extended from England to Japan, and from the Russian Empire to sub-Saharan Africa. North and South America, too, suffered turbulence. The distinguished historian Geoffrey Parker examines first-hand accounts of men and women throughout the world describing what they saw and suffered during a sequence of political, economic, and social crises that stretched from 1618 to the 1680s. Parker also deploys scientific evidence concerning climate conditions of the period, and his use of ‘natural’ as well as ‘human’ archives transforms our understanding of the World Crisis. Changes in the prevailing weather patterns during the 1640s and 1650s – longer and harsher winters, and cooler and wetter summers – disrupted growing seasons, causing dearth, malnutrition, and disease, along with more deaths and fewer births. Some contemporaries estimated that one-third of the world died, and much of the surviving historical evidence supports their pessimism.

Parker’s demonstration of the link between climate change and worldwide catastrophe 350 years ago stands as an extraordinary historical achievement. And the contemporary implications of his study are equally important: are we at all prepared today for the

catastrophes that climate change could bring tomorrow?

Yale University Press. Available Sept. 30, 2014. 904 pages; ISBN: 9780300208634.

The Worlds of the Seventeenth Century Hudson Valley, edited by Jaap Jacobs and L.H. Roper. Eleven essays provide the latest insights into the 17th-century history of the Hudson Valley. .

This book provides an introduction to the issues involved in the expansion of European interests to the Hudson River Valley, the cultural interaction that took place there, and the colonization of the region. Written in accessible language by leading scholars, these essays incorporate the latest historical insights as they explore the new world in which American Indians and Europeans interacted, the settlement of the Dutch colony that ensued from the exploration of the Hudson River, and the development of imperial and other networks which came to incorporate the Hudson Valley.

SUNY series, Studies in the Hudson Valley. Hardcover, 277 pages; ISBN13: 978-1-4384-5097-1

NNI News

John Lansing is NNI’s newest trustee. He, along with William Greer and Marilyn Douglas were elected for three year terms at our Annual General Meeting held at the Van Schaick Island Country Club in Cohoes, NY.

Paul Huey, received our 2014 Alice P. Kenney Award at the

meeting. Paul grew up in the village of Nassau, Rensselaer County. He was keenly aware of the Dutch name of his town, and developed an early interest in the Dutch. His most recent activities have been tours of downtown Albany for teachers, showing them where the Dutch lived and worked. He gave similar tours about the Dutch presence all along the Hudson River on the Dutch Apple. His contributions to Dutch history, material culture, and his spreading of the awareness of the Dutch presence has had a significant impact on both professionals and the public’s knowledge of American–Dutch history.

Next year’s seminar, to be held in Albany September 17–19, 2015, will be co-sponsored with the Association for the Advancement of Dutch–American Studies. The general conference theme will be “The Dutch in America across the Centuries: Connections and Comparisons.” A call for papers can be found at: www.aadas.nl and our website..

Reminder of the NNI fundraiser: In commemoration of the 400th anniversary of Fort Nassau, NNI will be raffling a “1614 Quilt” which was designed by Len Tantillo and quilted by Bonnie Urso and Corliss Tantillo. Raffle tickets have already been sent to members and are also available for purchase online and by mail. The quilt will be on display at the Albany Visitors Center, June and July, and at the New York State Museum, August and September. For more information go to our website.

Totidem Verbis

[Ed. note: Although this essay was first published on our website several years ago, it seems appropriate to feature it again in this space for reasons to be found in the body of the text.]

The Delft Thunderclap of 1654
by Peter A. Douglas

Since the start of the Eighty Years War, the Dutch army had been keeping central stores of gunpowder within the city walls of Delft. In the late morning of October 12, 1654, the city was rocked by an explosion in the Doelenkwartier, between Geerweg and Doelstraat in the northeast section of the city. The magazine, used for storing ammunition for the defense of the city, had blown up. It contained around 40 tons (80,000 to 90,000 pounds) of black powder stored in barrels in a former convent. The cause of the explosion is not known, but the keeper of the magazine, Cornelis Soetens, went inside with a visitor. Half an hour later the magazine blew up.

This was not the first time, nor was it to be the last, that such an explosion devastated a Dutch city, and clearly the home front is as dangerous as the fighting front. There were explosions in Bredevoort in 1646, Heusden in 1680 (both caused by lightning), Maastricht in 1761, Amersfoort in 1787, when Our Lady's Church was being used as a powder magazine. In Leiden in 1807, the vessel *Delfs Welvaaren*, moored in the Steenschuur canal in the middle of the city and laden with 38,000 pounds of black powder, blew up.

Such was the force of this explosion that the ship's anchor was found 900 meters away. (The largest wartime explosion prior to the development of the nuclear weapons took place in December 1917 when the ship *Mont Blanc*, laden with 3,000 tons of explosives, blew up in Halifax harbor, Nova Scotia, killing over 2,000 people and wounding 6,000.) In the Netherlands in modern times, unconnected with any war, there was the notorious *Vuurwerkkramp* (fireworks disaster) at Enschede in May 2000, when an explosion in a fireworks factory left 23 dead, 947 injured, and destroyed 400 homes.

The magazine explosion in Delft in 1654 was heard as far away as Texel on the North Sea, 150 kilometers distant. A quarter of the city was destroyed, and it was dramatically said at the time that a hundred cannons aiming at the city could not have caused more damage. Two hundred houses were razed, and another three hundred damaged. Large trees were sheared off to stumps, and the stained glass and roof of the Nieuwe Kerk were destroyed. It's fortunate that many of the citizens were out of city at the time, either at the Schiedam market or at a fair in The Hague. In an age of deep religious conviction, some naturally believed that it was the end of the world, with the gates of hell opening and God's wrath raining down on the town.

Although the number of casualties is unknown, it is estimated that the explosion caused at least a hundred deaths and injured thousands. Among the dead was one of Delft's most famous

painters, Carel Fabritius (1622-54), who died of his wounds sustained in the disaster. Only about a dozen of Fabritius' paintings have survived. Of these, *The Goldfinch* has earned a little recent fame by being featured in Donna Tartt's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of the same name, published in 2013.

There is a grim painting by Delft native Egbert van den Poel (1621-64) that gives us an abiding image of the devastation. In the distance against the horizon the two major churches of the ruined city, the Oude and the Nieuwe Kerk, stand relatively intact. Between them is the Town Hall tower. The church on the extreme right is the chapel of the Hospital of St George in Noordeinde. To the right of the picture is the area where the gunpowder had been stored; all that remains are a crater filled with water, some burnt trees, roofless houses, and piles of rubble. In the foreground, people are busy helping the wounded and comforting each other. Two men crossing a bridge on the left of the picture carry a basket containing the few belongings they have managed to salvage. The painting, now in the National Gallery, London, and what it depicts, is made more poignant when we know that the artist's son was killed that day.

NB: As the Marcurius does not use color images, the paintings by both Fabritius and Van den Poel will be posted on our website. Go to: <http://goo.gl/D5pO72>