

# De Nieuw Nederlandse Mercurius



Vol. 15, No. 4

"De Nieuw Nederlandse Mercurius"

November 1999

## Upcoming Events

**December 5, 1999.** CBS will air the made-for-TV movie "Santa and Pete," based on the book by Christopher Moore and Pamela Johnson. The story has a black grandfather, descendant of slaves under the Dutch, telling the story to his grandson of how Santa and his

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**December 11, 1999.** Celebrate the holiday season in the Dutch tradition. The Albany Visitors Center presents "Kinderfest," a children's festival with games, storytelling and other treats. 1-3pm. Storytelling at 2 pm, featuring Janny Venema of the NNP with tales from a Dutch bakery. Free. The

cated in the old waterworks building. The entrance to the Visitors Center is along the walkway between "Nicole's" and the "Pump Station."

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**Until January 2, 2000,** at the Detroit Institute of Arts, "Rembrandt: Masterpieces in Etching from the Morgan Library, New York" illustrates the 17th-century Dutch master's ability to capture (in black and white) a range of human emotions in dramatic settings. For further information: <[dia.org](http://dia.org)>.

Contact: 313/8337900.

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**Until January 9, 2000,** at the Cleveland Museum of Art, "Still-Life Paintings from the Netherlands, 1550-1720." This is the first major show of still lifes in over a decade, and the first in several decades to attempt to survey the lasting popular legacy of 16th- and 17th-century Dutch and Flemish still-life painting. For extensive additional information about the exhibit and the artform consult:

<[www.clemusart.com](http://www.clemusart.com)>.

Contact: 216/4217340.

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**Until January 31, 2000** in the European Reading Room of the Library of Congress, an exhibit featuring the work of the New

Dutch children's song welcoming the arrival of Sinterklaas.

helper Black Pete came to the New World in the days of the Dutch. The TV movie, starring James Earl Jones, Hume Cronyn and Flex Alexander, portrays New Amsterdam in the 17th century and has a starring role for Domine Bogardus. *Caveat spectator.*

Center is next to the Quackenbush House, which houses the restaurant "Nicole's Bistro." Plenty of parking is available by driving past "Nicole's" and turning right on Spencer Street just past the BP gas station. Follow the signs for the "Pump Station," a brew pub lo-

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Netherland Project, with a selection of documents from the Library's collection.

Contact: 202/7075522.

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**Until June 2000.** The city of Ghent in Flanders is celebrating the birth of Charles V, who was born on February 24, 1500 in the Prinsenhof. The multiplicity and variety of events, too numerous to do justice to here, can be viewed on the web: <keizerkarel1500-2000.gent.be>. Or contact: VZW Ghent 1500 - 2000 / Sint-Baafsplein 2A / B-9000 Ghent, Belgium. Tel: +32 (0)9 266.56.00 Fax: +32 (0)9 266.56.29; email: <KeizerKarel1500-2000@gent.be>

### Editor's note

I wish to thank all those who sent in letters of congratulations for the 25th anniversary of the NNP. Once again I was taken completely by surprise. It was most gratifying to hear that the NNP has been helpful to so many people.

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The Rensselaerswijck Seminar in September attracted over 150 people. The papers presented on the theme "New Netherland through the Decades" will appear in forthcoming issues of *De Halve Maen*. Tapes of the proceedings can be ordered directly from the NNP. We are already busy on the 2000 Seminar which will address the theme "New Light on New Netherland," featuring papers on newly uncovered documentary sources.

### News from the FNN

Save the date January 22, 2000 for the annual meeting to be held at the New York Genealogical and

Biographical Society in New York City at 124 East 58th St. from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. Doors open at noon.

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The New Netherland Project Dinner, under the auspices of the Consulate General of the Netherlands,

was held at the Terrace Gallery of the Cultural Education Center in Albany, following the annual Rensselaerswijck Seminar on September 18, 1999. The Consulate General was represented by Ms. Lily Talapessy and Mr. Frank

Private donors and foundations in the various categories of membership in the FNN  
(Revised list of August 1999 issue; corporate donors appear in italics)

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#### Benefactor (10,000+): none

Ligtvoet, Counselor of Cultural Affairs USA, who spoke at the Dinner. In all, 118 guests were present from across the USA and abroad.

The Dinner, a major fundraiser for the Project, netted approximately \$5,000.

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### Attention, all Santas!

There's great news for on-line shoppers! It is now possible to order toys, video games, software, tools, and many other items on your Christmas list from Amazon, the world's largest Internet shopping site. Many of you are already purchasing books from Amazon via our Web page, and in so doing are supporting the New Netherland Project. Now the purchase of any other product offered by Amazon will also mean a significant royalty for FNN, if you remember to access Amazon from our web page. Here's how: Point your web browser to <[www.nnp.org](http://www.nnp.org)> and select <Book Store>. Now you can search Books via Amazon. For books of special interest, scroll down and click on the desired text. Or access Amazon directly and browse to your heart's content for just about anything that's on the wish lists, including your own. Still looking for just the right Christmas card? We especially recommend our 5" x 7" card depicting a 17th-century Dutch Colfer on skates. This beautiful card, printed in black on ivory paper, with matching envelopes, costs \$10 per package of 10 for 1 - 5 packs, and \$8 per package for more than 5 packs. The card can be viewed on-line when you click <Boutique> on our Web page, where you will also find other great gifts. Print out the

order form and mail with your check to Friends of New Netherland, P.O. Box 2536, ESP Station, Albany, NY 12220-0536, or send us your order on plain paper and be sure to indicate where the order must be sent (\$2.50 for the first pack and \$0.50 for each additional pack, for handling and mailing). With every card you mail, you support the New Netherland Project and draw attention to its work!



Rembrandt self portrait

### Publications

*Rembrandt's Eyes* by Simon Schama. You may remember the author from his interpretation of Dutch culture in the 17th century entitled *The Embarrassment of Riches*. According to the description in Amazon: "Through a succession of superbly incisive descriptions and interpretations of Rembrandt's paintings threaded into this narrative, (Schama) allows us to see Rembrandt's life clearly and to think about it afresh..."

Hardcover-640 pages Knopf

ISBN: 067940256X. Amazon's discount price is \$35.00. Remember to access Amazon through our website <[www.nnp.org](http://www.nnp.org)> by clicking on <Book Store> and then <Amazon>.

*Caveat lector!* Before rushing out to buy this book I recommend that you read Jonathan Israel's review of this book in the *Times Literary Supplement*, November 5, 1999.

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New in the "Voyages in Time" series is *Meet Me at Midnight* by Alan Daniel, Lea Daniel and Jim Penner. Written for grades 4-6, ages 9-12, the story involves Pieter, an orphan, who comes to New Amsterdam as an indentured servant with the dream of making his fortune in the New World. The question is whether he will follow an honest or dishonest route. 64 pages; ISBN: 0-7802-00567-1 For further information and other books in the series visit the site: <[www.wrightgroup.com/voyages](http://www.wrightgroup.com/voyages)>.

### News

Thanks to the indefatigable work of our webmaster, Howard Funk, the first volume of Rensselaerswijk papers entitled *A Beautiful and Fruitful Place* will soon appear on our website and also be available in a CD-Rom edition. This volume represents papers from the first ten years of seminars, which has been out of print for many years. The next ten years of papers are being assembled and edited by Martha Shattuck at our outpost in Tucson. We are hoping for a bound publication of volume II sometime in 2000.

## Totidem Verbis

My original intention for this space was to fill it with material of interest to the general readership; items which would not necessarily fit in the various columns above. Over the years we have had translations, a calendar of events, articles, newspaper accounts among others. This issue features its first book review. The reviewer is John Rowen, a frequent contributor to local PBS programs, The Gazette, a Schenectady-based newspaper, and friend of the NNP for many years.

*The Hudson Valley Dutch and Their Houses* by Harrison Meeske (Purple Mountain Press 414 pages, \$29, ISBN 0-916346-64-1)

Droste, the Dutch chocolate maker, sells a chocolate apple, wrapped in majestic blue foil. When gently tapped on the table and then unwrapped, the apple falls into 20 perfectly-shaped slices of rich chocolate.

Harrison Meeske's book on the Hudson valley Dutch and colonial Dutch architecture is a lot like the Droste chocolate apple. The book's history and cope is as rich and complete as fine Dutch chocolate. Meeske's capable writing and strong organization make this slightly long book as easy to read as the apple is to unwrap and consume.

*The Hudson Valley Dutch and Their Houses* covers every aspect of the life and architecture of Dutch settlers in the New World. It is generously illustrated with black and white photographs.

The book's first half opens with a grand, sweeping overview of the events in Europe that caused the Dutch to explore the New World. Then, Meeske uses an effective mix of statistics and stories to describe the Dutch who settled in the Hudson valley and the New York region. The book reaches its midpoint with a discussion of how Dutch laws and practices on land ownership, tenant arming and leases were adapted to the New World.

In the book's second half, Meeske continues to offer information on colonial Dutch history and society. But he offers this information from the perspective of contractors and workers building a home, from the craftsmen who finished the home's interior and from the women who chose the furnishings for the completed home.

The book ends with a glossary of important building terms, a good index, references to other books on the colonial Dutch experience and a list of "Dutch colonial museums and Restorations to Visit."

The Dutch settled a region of ca. 35,000 square miles: from Albany on the

north and Hartford, Connecticut on the east all the way south to Delaware Bay. The territory in between included New York City, Long Island, all of New Jersey and part of Delaware and Pennsylvania.

Even with this vast area filled with Dutch history and architecture, the Capital Region is generously represented in Meeske's book. Meeske uses photographs and examples from about 20 Dutch homes in the Capital Region to illustrate key points about construction or furnishings.

The book's introduction was written by



Luykas van Alen House, 1737, Kinderhook, NY  
Photograph by Geoffrey Gross

Roderic Blackburn, a Kinderhook resident who designed the "Dutch Room" exhibit in the Albany Institute of History and Art. Meeske presents much material from the translations of Charles Gehring, a Voorheesville resident and Director of the New Netherland Project. He draws on the work of area-like historians Shirley Dunn, Paul Huey, Oliver Rink, and Vincent Schaefer.

Meeske was inspired to write this book because he grew up in a house of Dutch design in Dutchess County. When he was an adult, he began to look for a home and his good memories of his childhood home drew him to Dutch architecture. He wrote his book for "the history buff, homeowner and prospective restorer."

Meeske is a master of the understated, yet amazing fact or story. For example, he discovered that Dutch settlers were key to modern fire safety in America. Hudson Valley Dutch houses were initially roofed with thatch and built of wood. The prospect of such houses, built close together

and catching fire, prompted the Albany Dutch to pass laws requiring the use of bricks for walls and roofing tiles.

But before Meeske explains the development of fire safety ordinances, he goes through a quick, yet fascinating discussion of thatched roofs. He suggests that "Dutch" thatching techniques may have originate in Brittany and Normandy, France. He says that in modern Europe, "thousands of buildings are still roofed in this traditional material."

Meeske gets readers coming to this book for one purpose to appreciate other aspects of colonial Dutch history or architecture. For example, I am more interested in history than home building. Yet I was beguiled by Meeske's discussions of brick making and his discussion of how lack of electrical light shaped home design and the scheduling of work throughout the day.

This book was designed so that in each chapter the pictures follow the text, rather than appearing throughout the text. This was frustrating in places because seeing something complements the experience of reading about it. Hopefully in a future revision of the book, publisher and author will design the text and pictures to work better together.

But this concern aside, Meeske's writing made it generally easy for me, a do it yourself klutz, to understand Dutch construction methods. I even had realized that modern local construction techniques like the practice of bracing a house frame and notching roof rafters, which my friend Rick Lemner, a local contractor, taught me for my daughter's clubhouse, came from Hudson valley Dutch construction techniques developed over 300 years ago.

A wide variety of people will find *The Hudson Valley Dutch and Their Houses* an enjoyable, intriguing read. And if you prefer to see, rather than read about, Dutch architecture, Meeske suggests a visit to Schenectady's Stockade District, the Quackenbush House or Schuyler Mansion in Albany, Fort Crailo in Rensselaer or the Mabee House—near Rotterdam Junction.