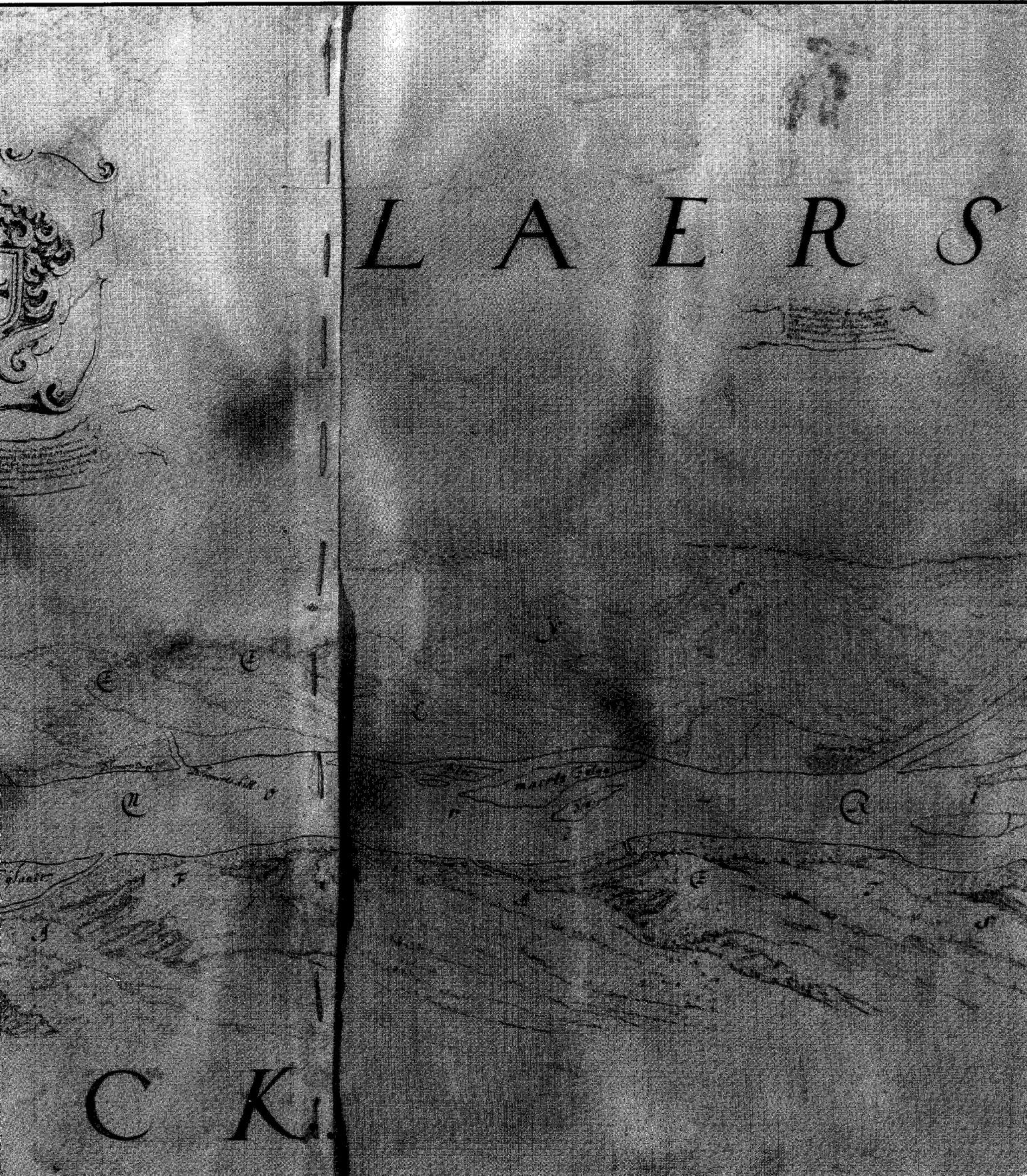


A Beautiful and Fruitful Place

SELECTED RENSSELAERSWIJCK SEMINAR PAPERS



L A E R S

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SELECTED RENSSELAERSWIJCK
SEMINAR PAPERS

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Dedicated to

The Rev. Dr. Howard G. Hageman

President of the Friends of the
New Netherland Project
for his enduring support
of Dutch colonial research
as represented in this volume

Nancy Anne McClure Zeller, born in Oklahoma City in 1948, is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin with a Ph.D. in German literature and language. Her dissertation, *Ulrich Becher: A Computer-Assisted Study of the Reception of an Exile* was published in 1983 by Peter Lang/Berne. As a graduate student, she was assistant editor for a volume of seminar papers entitled *Myth and Reason: A Symposium* published by the University of Texas Press in 1973; and she has written articles on various topics for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *German Studies*, *The German Quarterly*, and *Applied Language Studies*, among others. In 1982–83 she was a member of an NEH-sponsored teacher training institute at Austin College in Sherman, Texas, on the use of authentic materials in teaching foreign languages. Since joining the New Netherland Project in 1984, she has organized eight Rensselaerswijck Seminars and given frequent talks to teachers about the New Netherland Project and the use of primary sources in social studies teaching.

Charles T. Gehring was born in Fort Plain, an old Erie Canal town in New York State's Mohawk Valley. After completing his undergraduate and graduate work at West Virginia University, he continued with post graduate studies at Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg, Germany. There he began his study of the Dutch language and first realized that his future research lay much closer to home. He eventually received a Ph.D. in Germanic Linguistics from Indiana University with a concentration in Netherlandic Studies. His dissertation (1973) was a linguistic investigation of the survival of the Dutch language in colonial New York. He is presently director of the New York State Library's New Netherland Project, which is responsible for translating the official records of the Dutch colony and promoting awareness of the Dutch role in American history. He has been a fellow of the Holland Society of New York since 1979.

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Introduction

In 1979 when the first Rensselaerswijck Seminar was held it was doubtful whether its sponsor, the New Netherland Project, would last another ten months. Five years after the beginning of the Project in 1974 there was still only sporadic financial support and low visibility. Although the *Guide to Dutch Manuscripts* and volumes 20 and 21 of the "Colonial Manuscripts" (*Delaware Papers*) had been published, few people were aware of the Project's existence. We had to go public. Esoteric work, or what seems to be such, requires either a private endowment to sustain itself or broad public support. The challenge was to transfer the perception of translating seventeenth-century Dutch as an exotic exercise into a means for understanding American heritage.

New Netherland was a vast territory between New England and Virginia that provided a significant challenge to the English for most of the seventeenth century. Many now prominent cities in this area (Albany, New York City, etc.) were founded by the Dutch. But hardly anyone knew about the Dutch origins or cared. What was known about the Dutch was considered quaint and inconsequential—mostly a Washington Irvingesque dreamland that many construed as history. An important period of our early history and development had been reduced to satire, to a sort of comic opera not worth serious consideration. What really seemed to matter was that the English took control and eliminated this anomaly in our colonial history. Had the thousands of New Netherlanders who lived and died in this country no part in shaping the American character? Was their only contribution a healthy dose of "vans" in the telephone book?

The translation and publication program of the New Netherland Project was directed to the goal of providing primary source material for scholars who would write a balanced history of New Netherland and test its significance in the growth and development of our country. However, the Project was faced with a dilemma. It would require years for enough of the translations to be completed in order to have an impact but we needed to acquire public support as soon as possible in order to survive. With this in mind the Project decided to sponsor an annual seminar that would offer a forum to scholars to present their latest research and a place for the interested public to learn about its heritage. Thus the Rensselaerswijck Seminar was born.

In April of 1979 the name of the seminar was in fact more descriptive than symbolic. Our original intention was to attract local scholars who were researching topics pertaining to local (i.e. Albany area) seventeenth-century history of the patroonship of Rensselaerswijck. At that first seminar eight papers were offered on a variety of topics ranging from documentary sources for the patroonship of Rensselaerswijck to an analysis of the office of schout. The seminar was attended by just over one hundred people which gave us the encouragement to proceed on an annual basis. In the early years we had no operating budget. This forced us to rely on local human resources, who were idealistic enough to share their research without compensation; the seminar was open to the public at no charge. It was a case of local scholars presenting research on local history to the local public. Fine for a few years, but soon the local talent is exhausted, and the local public, whose expectations rise faster than the development of new local subject matter, becomes bored.

The seminar needed an injection of new blood and a broader base from which to operate. This was accomplished first by opening the subject matter to the entire West India Company colony of New Netherland, which gave us more geographical flexibility; and secondly by expanding the general theme to the Dutch experience in North America, which gave us chronological flexibility. Instead of limiting ourselves to a small corner of the Dutch colony for a time span of less than fifty years, we had broadened our horizons to include the entire colony for a period of time approaching the American Revolution. This expansion of focus was linked to financial support that enabled us to pay expenses for speakers outside our area. The watershed year was 1986 when Eastern Airlines and KLM underwrote the travel expenses for one speaker from Australia and one from the Netherlands. A nominal registration fee has allowed us to maintain a cash reserve from which we can pay expenses and honoraria.

Originally we had planned to publish all the papers given at the first nine Rensselaerswijck Seminars in time for the tenth; at first glance a simple task. The idea to have an anniversary volume arose from the fact that we had been able to publish only the proceedings of seminars 6–8, while the earlier papers remained unpublished and inaccessible to researchers.

However, the following papers do not represent the actual proceedings of the first ten seminars. Just as our memory of the past is often reshaped by present exigencies, this collection represents the efforts of almost thirty scholars to grapple with an event quickly fading in memory. Some were able to recover their talks as if only a few hours had passed; some had spoken from notes and submitted written versions; some requested permission to rewrite their talks in the light of new information; some were dissatisfied with their original talk and submitted entirely new papers; some submitted papers who had not actually given papers; some couldn't remember ever having been at the seminar. Thus the past is restructured according to our ability to manage the present.

The papers are grouped according to seminar in chronological order. The topics explore such diverse subject matter as education, Negro slaves and freedmen, merchants, crime and punishment, agriculture, and the Dutch foundations of Albany. It is hoped that this volume will answer some questions, provide some direction and most of all stimulate further research on the Dutch experience in North America.

The title: *A Beautiful and Fruitful Place*, comes from Johannes de Laet's *New World*, book III, in which the author uses the above phrase to sum up a passage quoted from Hudson's journal. Although much has changed since that 18th of September in 1609 when Hudson and his crew first laid eyes on the coastal plain where Albany now stands, little has this original assessment been diminished.

Charles T. Gehring, Director
New Netherland Project
Albany 1991

Editorial Policy

With twenty-eight different authors came a myriad of editorial decisions. Unless glaring factual errors were detected, each author's text was simply incorporated into the format selected without change in content. In rare instances, the editor has made comments on content in the endnotes. However, these papers are the contributions and viewpoints of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the New Netherland Project. There was no attempt to standardize spellings of Dutch names; however, the index tries to provide cross references to variant spellings. The *Chicago Manual of Style* and editorial policy from recent New Netherland Project publications were the authorities used. The text was produced with the desktop publishing program Ventura Publisher using the equipment of the New Netherland Project. This book is published with the assistance of a grant from the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation and the Friends of the New Netherland Project.

Nancy Anne McClure Zeller