



SOUTH ST. FROM MAIDEN LANE.

New York's South Street port bustling with commerce during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Andrew Van Tuyl, a *Drygoods Merchant*, kept shop near here as did later Van Tuyl merchants. For many years, Benjamin Seaman Van Tuyl served as the official *Weigher and Gauger* for the Port of New York. By the 19th century's end, the Van Tuyl family had departed New York City - a number of them for Texas. [William James Bennett, Stokes Collection, New York Public Library. Used by Permission.]

Chapter 11

New York Merchants 1789~1879

Capital of the New Republic

On April 30, 1789, George Washington swore his oath of office as first President of the United States while standing on the balcony of *Federal Hall* in New York City, on the north side of Wall St. - just across from where Jan Otten Van Tuyl had lived a century earlier. The new government of the United States of America was to be located right here, at the center of America's former Tory stronghold, in what was now being called the *Federal Town*, a city risen from the ashes of war, now poised for an explosion of growth and prosperity. It was, some think, New York City's most glorious moment. At war's end in 1783, the city's population stood at just 10,000 - down from its prewar 23,614 - and much of it still lay in ruins from the fire of 1776 and other war-related disasters. But during the six years since the British and many of their adherents had sailed away, while the nation's leaders crafted a government based on *Federalism* as defined by a new Constitution, longtime New Yorkers, Patriots and Loyalists alike - as well as thousands of newly arrived citizens - pulled together to rebuild their town, constructing some 4000 new houses, rebuilding all the public structures, and erecting a brand-new Trinity Church at the head of Wall Street.¹

That Loyalist sympathizers were more or less peacefully integrated back into New York's society was due in large part to the great Federalist Alexander Hamilton, who, in an influential newspaper article written under the pseudonym "Phocion", argued:²

Nothing can be more ridiculous than the idea of expelling a few [Loyalists] from this city and neighborhood...The idea of suffering the Tories to live among us under disqualifications is equally mischievous and absurd...there is not a single interest of the community but dictates moderation rather than violence.

Hamilton's rhetoric prevailed, and middle-class merchants and professionals of the city - people like Andrew Van Tuyl - were able to carry on more or less unmolested. Hamilton, it seems, was not the only official of the new regime to hold out the olive branch to the former Loyalists:³

George Washington was at heart an aristocrat who thought that the common people had no right to the kind of pleasures enjoyed by the rich. It was said that he invited only the wealthy and prominent - "the fashionable, elegant and refined" - to his afternoon gatherings, and not a few of the rich so honored had been Tory sympathizers during the war.

¹ Allen, O.E., "New York, New York," Antheneum, New York, 1990, pp. 81-90.

² Hamilton, A., in "The Annals of America," Britannica, 1976, vol. 3, pp. 12-13.

³ Churchill, A., "The Upper Crust," Prentice-Hall, 1970, pp. 25-26.

New-York was, in 1789, the nation's premiere city. As the capital of New York State, and of the new nation, it embarked on a gala social season to celebrate Washington's inauguration:⁴

The impoverished condition of the country has in a manner passed away and there are dames and demoiselles in the city of New York who have the money in their purses to bestow upon gewgaws, furbelows, and feathers late from Paris, and also men of sufficient wealth to enable them to copy closely the elaborate and costly costumes of the fops and beaux of London.

It seems that 1789 was a good time to be in the clothing business.

A Merchant of New York

Andrew Van Tuyl was a thirty-seven year old father of nine children (with a tenth on the way) at the time of George Washington's inauguration. He and his wife Maria lived at 46 Water St. in a house owned by Maria's father, Peter Bogert.^{5,6} Although Andrew had started his New York mercantile career in partnership with a Mr. Varick [presumably Abraham], by the postwar years he was in business for himself, possibly being financed by (or in partnership with) his father-in-law Peter Bogert.⁷ His business was *dry goods*: cloth, hats, hosiery and all the other accouterments so desired by the men and women of New York City.⁸ If his business was at all typical of the time, it must have boomed during the 1780s. New York's appetite for imported goods was seemingly unquenchable. There was just one problem: how to pay for it all?

During the first years of the Republic, each of the loosely-confederated states issued and backed its own currency. But some states - especially northern states like New York and Massachusetts - were deeply in debt, and their currency was not acceptable to foreign merchants.⁹ Yet New York was a thriving city, port of entry, and market center whose demand for imports far outstripped its ability to export in exchange. In 1784-85, for example, the City of London exported some £405,762 worth of goods to New York, but received only £61,671 of imports in exchange.¹⁰

⁴ Churchill, pg. 28. Quoting a contemporary account.

⁵ "Assessment of Real and Personal Property in the East Ward of New York City [1791]," in *Collections of The New-York Historical Society*, 1910, pg. 347.

⁶ The Will of Peter Bogert, in *New-York Historical Society Abstracts of Wills*, 1905, vol. xiv, pp. 306-308. Peter Bogert, who lived on *Pot-Baker Hill*, owned several houses on Water St. He willed the one at 46 Water St. [on the northwest side of the street] to Maria, wife of Andrew Van Tuyl, and his house on southeast side of the street to his daughter Anne.

⁷ "Assessment of Real and Personal Property in the East Ward of New York City [1791]," in *Collections of The New-York Historical Society*, 1910, pg. 342. Andrew Van Tuyl is listed as having a store on Front St. [number 24, according to the city directory], and Peter Bogert is next to him as having a store with identical assessed valuation. A half-ownership in Andrew's troubled business may be implied by this, but there is no direct evidence of partnership.

⁸ Rothschild, N., "New York City Neighborhoods," 1990, pg. 225.

⁹ Allen, pg. 88. Alexander Hamilton engineered a deal whereby the Federal Government would take over state debts and, in exchange, the capital would be moved farther south. Hence, the U.S. Capitol is today in the District of Columbia, not New York or Philadelphia.

¹⁰ *Universal British Directory of Trade and Commerce*, London, 1790, pg. xxix.



A British cartoon of 1847 satirizes the “Modern” fashion: tight-fitting pants for the men, with accompanying coats, hats, and furnishings; bustles and exaggerated bosom for the women, along with feathers, fur and draping accessories. The postwar former colonies wished for no less: “*Gay cloaks and hats of every shape and size, Scarfs, cardinals, and ribbons of all dyes; With ruffles stamped, and aprons of tambour, Tippetts and handkerchiefs, at least three score*” [Mrs. Warren, a contemporary, as quoted in: McClellan, E. “History of American Costume,” pg. 202]. [Illustration: Library of Congress Collections, British Museum Prints, #7251]

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In order to keep the flow of goods moving, the London merchants extended easy credit terms to their American customers, and were very slow to collect what was owed them.¹¹

A...problem for the British merchants was the great addition to the debt as a result of the large shipment of cloth and other commodities popular in America as soon as the peace was signed. By 1785 the market was glutted and the Americans in many cases were unable to get the foreign silver coins needed to pay for the goods they welcomed so warmly.

So although Andrew Van Tuyl may have been doing a booming business during the 1780s, he was being paid mostly in New York currency, and it was up to him to convert that currency into suitable payment for his London suppliers. It seems that Andrew imported a little bit of everything the well-dressed New Yorker might want, including: hats, pins, gloves, and hosiery; silk, baize [felt], linen, woolens, and muslin; perfume, wine, tobacco, and pewter; and even salted fish!¹² Apparently, he also exported some commodities to London in exchange - judging from the fact that many of his creditors were London warehousemen.¹³

But by 1789, Andrew was in big trouble. His debts had mounted staggeringly, and he had no other recourse but to declare bankruptcy.¹⁴ A bankrupt merchant of the 18th century - in either the United States or Britain - was not necessarily reduced to personal poverty, nor was he sent to debtor's prison:¹⁵

Since Elizabethan times, the law had drawn a careful distinction between bankrupt traders and insolvent debtors. Recognising that traders could not live without credit, legal draftsmen drew up statutes which offered some measure of protection to the honest but unfortunate trader: creditors had full access to his goods and possessions but they could not lay hands on his body.

Starting in 1784, Andrew had converted some of his local-currency earnings into land purchases, buying properties on Water St. and Great George St., as well as property on the East River at Corlear's Hook.¹⁶ Now, in 1789, he signed over all this real property, as well as all his personal property (excluding his household effects) to Robert Lenox, a fellow New York merchant. In

¹¹ Kellock, K.A., "London Merchants and the Pre 1776 American Debts," in *Guildhall Studies in London History* vol. I no. 3, Oct., 1974, pp. 111, 113. The last of the London Merchants' pre-war debts was finally settled in 1811! Annual interest was typically 5%.

¹² *New York County Deeds*, Liber 47, pp. 125-130 list his London suppliers. *Universal British Directory of Trade and Commerce*, London, 1790, tells us their specialties, thus identifying Andrew's imports.

¹³ *ibid.* We don't know what his exports were.

¹⁴ *New York County Deeds*, Liber 46, pp. 302-308.

¹⁵ Aris, S., "Going Bust...Inside the Bankruptcy Business," Deutsch, London, 1985, pg. 35.

¹⁶ *New York County Deeds*, Liber 44, pp. 87-89; Liber 43, pp. 21-24, 417-421; Liber 45, pp. 1-6. For a complete listing of Andrew's purchases, see: *Index of Conveyances Recorded in the Office of the Register of the City and County of New York, 1664-1857* [NYGBS microfilm, reel 5]. Interestingly, the Corlear's Hook property had been part of James DeLancey's pre-war estate, which he forfeited because of his Tory politics.

return, Lenox agreed to post a £40,000 bond to satisfy Andrew's London creditors.¹⁷ On 15 June, 1789, Andrew turned over his affairs to bankruptcy trustees, and by 31 August the London creditors, seeing bankruptcy as preferable to liquidation, agreed to the deal.¹⁸ Andrew Van Tuyl, merchant of New York, was still in business, but his business was at the mercy of his trustees and, probably, of Robert Lenox.¹⁹

The Alderman

New York City had, by the 1790s, been electing its city officials for over a century. Although the mayor was appointed by the State Governor, the *aldermen* were elected by districts - called *wards* - of which there were six during most of the 18th century. Redistricting in the 1790s replaced the old *East Ward* with the new *Third Ward* and Andrew Van Tuyl was chosen to be its alderman.^{20,21} Apparently, Andrew was recovering from his bankruptcy during this period, having purchased property on Fletcher St. by 1791, and having moved his business uptown to 166 Water St. - in the heart of the Third Ward - by 1794.^{22,23} The office of alderman was apparently not full-time, since Andrew was listed in the 1795 city directory as "merchant and alderman", but the duties must have been substantial, since he was listed as having an assistant.^{24, 25}

As alderman, Andrew must have been called upon to handle a variety of civic affairs and complaints. As a politician, he would have - or should have - known about the importance of associating with only the "right" people. For example: Richard Varick, then Mayor of New York, had been General Benedict Arnold's aide during the Revolution. When Arnold committed his treason, Varick came under suspicion, and it was only through zealous action - and the intercession of George Washington - that Varick was able to salvage his career.²⁶ So it seems that Andrew was either politically naive or that he deliberately was making a point, when it came to the affair of Cavalier Jouet. Jouet was a notorious Tory who published, in 1795, a whining broadside entitled

¹⁷ *New York County Deeds*, Liber 46, pp. 302-308.

¹⁸ *New York County Deeds*, Liber 47, pp. 125-130. One of the bankruptcy trustees was George Douglas, Jr., apparently Andrew's nephew by his sister Phoebe and her second husband.

¹⁹ Lenox's business address was 175 Pearl St. [NYC Directory, 1795], and he lived at 235 Queen St. [Assessments, pg. 361]. We do not know what his business was, nor do we know whether he had claims against Andrew's future earnings after 1789. However, by 1791, Andrew did own his own store on Front St., and a house on Fletcher St., according to the assessment rolls.

²⁰ New York City Directories for 1795 and 1796.

²¹ Library of Congress Map G3804 .N5 1797 .H3 1853

²² New York City Directories for 1794

²³ "Assessment of Real and Personal Property in the East Ward of New York City [1791]," in *Collections of The New-York Historical Society*, 1910, pg. 378.

²⁴ New York City Directory for 1795, pg. 280. Offices were at 166 Water St.

²⁵ New York City Directory for 1796, pg. 187. Offices were at 6&8 Fletcher St. - apparently his property. The City Directory listings suggest that Andrew served was in office for two years only: 1795-96.

²⁶ *The Dictionary of American Biography*. Richard Varick was probably related to Andrew Van Tuyl's early business partner and later brother-in-law, Abraham Varick.

A Letter Addressed to the Rev. Doctor Beech, in which he complained bitterly about being unable to obtain a certificate to preach, due to:²⁷

Strong Prejudices against me on account of my having been, in Days of Yore, an inflexible Loyalist...

Alderman Andrew Van Tuyl certified nothing more than the fact that Jouet had sworn before him that claims made in the document were true. But it would seem that Andrew, had he opposed Jouet's politics, or even if he had wanted to preserve his own political career, could have found a way to avoid signing this document. It is not unreasonable to think that Mayor Richard Varick would have been embarrassed by *any* hint of his aldermen supporting Tory causes. Given Andrew's wartime political sympathies, it may be that he was indeed using his city office to indirectly voice his political views. But in any event, his political career was short-lived: after 1796, Andrew Van Tuyl was out of office.

The 1790s were hard times for New York City, but its growth continued unabated with the population nearly doubling during the decade as the city expanded northward.²⁸ Yellow fever infected the city during the autumns of both 1791 and 1795, and increased immigration swelled the ranks of the city's poor. *About one-third of the city's white population was believed to be destitute by 1800*, bringing about increased crime and overcrowded prisons.²⁹ Amid all this, Andrew and Mary [Maria] Van Tuyl continued to expand their family: she bore their 15th and last child in 1798, one month before turning 43. Theirs must have been a loving and supportive relationship to have endured war, bankruptcy, politics, epidemics, and urban blight. But Mary's domestic workload, it must be noted, was certainly eased by the fact that she had the services of domestic slaves. She had grown up in a slaveholding household, so would probably have been lost without them.³⁰ After the American Revolution, freeing of slaves became a moral movement in New York City, with the *Society for Promoting Manumission of Slaves* - led by no less a social and political leader than John Jay - meeting as early as 1786.³¹ As the city's population grew, its slave population gradually decreased, falling from 21,324 in 1790 to 15,017 in 1810.³² As slaves were freed, and as already-free Negroes filtered into town, they settled in an area of Andrew Van Tuyl's Third Ward; along Nassau, Fair, Beekman, and Gold streets.³³ Mary had two domestic slaves - Lanah and Diana Wise - who were finally freed in 1811, after her child-rearing years were over.³⁴

²⁷ NYHS Microform Collection and Univ. of Calif. Irvine Microfiche M 00235 no. 28911.

²⁸ Stokes, I., "New York Past and Present," 1939, pg. 75. Population was 33,131 in 1790; 60,515 in 1800.

²⁹ Allen, pp. 90-91.

³⁰ The Will of Peter Bogert, in *New-York Historical Society Abstracts of Wills*, 1905, vol. xiv, pp. 306-308.

³¹ New York City Directory, 1786.

³² Morgan, V., "Slavery in New York," in *Historic New York* [Ed. Goodwin et al.], 1897, series II, vol. I, pp.28-29.

³³ Rothschild, pp. 100-101. Based on analysis of 1790 census.

³⁴ *New York County Deeds*, Liber 95, pp. 337-38. Logically, one was probably a daughter of the other.

Andrew Van Tuyl & Son

Peter Van Tuyl, Andrew's eldest son, turned 21 in 1795 while his father was serving as alderman. Undoubtedly, Peter had helped in his father's store for many years by that time, and probably felt he knew as much - or more - than Andrew about how to run an import-based drygoods business. So, about 1795 and probably with the blessing of Andrew, young Peter sailed for London, England. His mission was to establish himself - apparently in partnership with Andrew - as a London merchant. Possibly, the plan was for Peter to sell American goods in London, thereby earning foreign exchange for the troubled import business in New York. Peter set up a shop on Haydon Square, off The Minories just north of the Tower of London.³⁵ We can only speculate as to what his business was, but this we do know: during this period he met and married a young English girl, Olivia Bullock.³⁶

While Peter was in London during 1797 and 1798, Andrew - now finished with his political career - had established a new shop on Maiden Lane, which he proudly called *Van-Tuyl & son*.³⁷ Even at this late date, it appears that Andrew still had no option but to accept American currency in payment, even though he invoiced his customers in pounds:³⁸

			<i>New York 7th Feb. 1797</i>
<i>Mr. Sam Delaplane</i>	<i>Bot of And^r Van Tuyl</i>		
<i>1 P^c Irish Linen</i>	<i>20 yds - 2/10</i>		<i>£ 2. 16. 8</i>
<i>1 " " "</i>	<i>26 " 3/9</i>		<i>4. 17. 6</i>
			<i>£ 7. 14. 2</i>
<i>Recvd payment</i>			
<i>\$19.27</i>	<i>Andrew Van Tuyl</i>		

The family business lurched along, but by 1800 Peter Van Tuyl had gone bankrupt in London.³⁹ After the failure of his London enterprise, Peter returned to New York, where he did business out of the old 166 Water St. location, while Andrew operated separately on Maiden Lane. But by 1803, the inevitable finally caught up with Andrew: just before Christmas, on 23 Dec., 1803, a commission of bankruptcy was issued against him, and his creditors descended. Chief among them: Robert Lenox.⁴⁰ Andrew's business was down and out for the last time.

³⁵ Smith, W., & Co., "List of Bankrupts 1786 - 1806," London, 1806. No page number. Also: "The A to Z of Georgian London," published by the London Topographical Society, publication #126, 1982, plate 14.

³⁶ An apparently true copy of the family Bible of Andrew Van Tuyl, copied all in one hand after April 1862 and before April 10, 1863 by an unknown scribe, and passed through the family. Peter married Olivia Bullock on 10 Jan., 1796, in London.

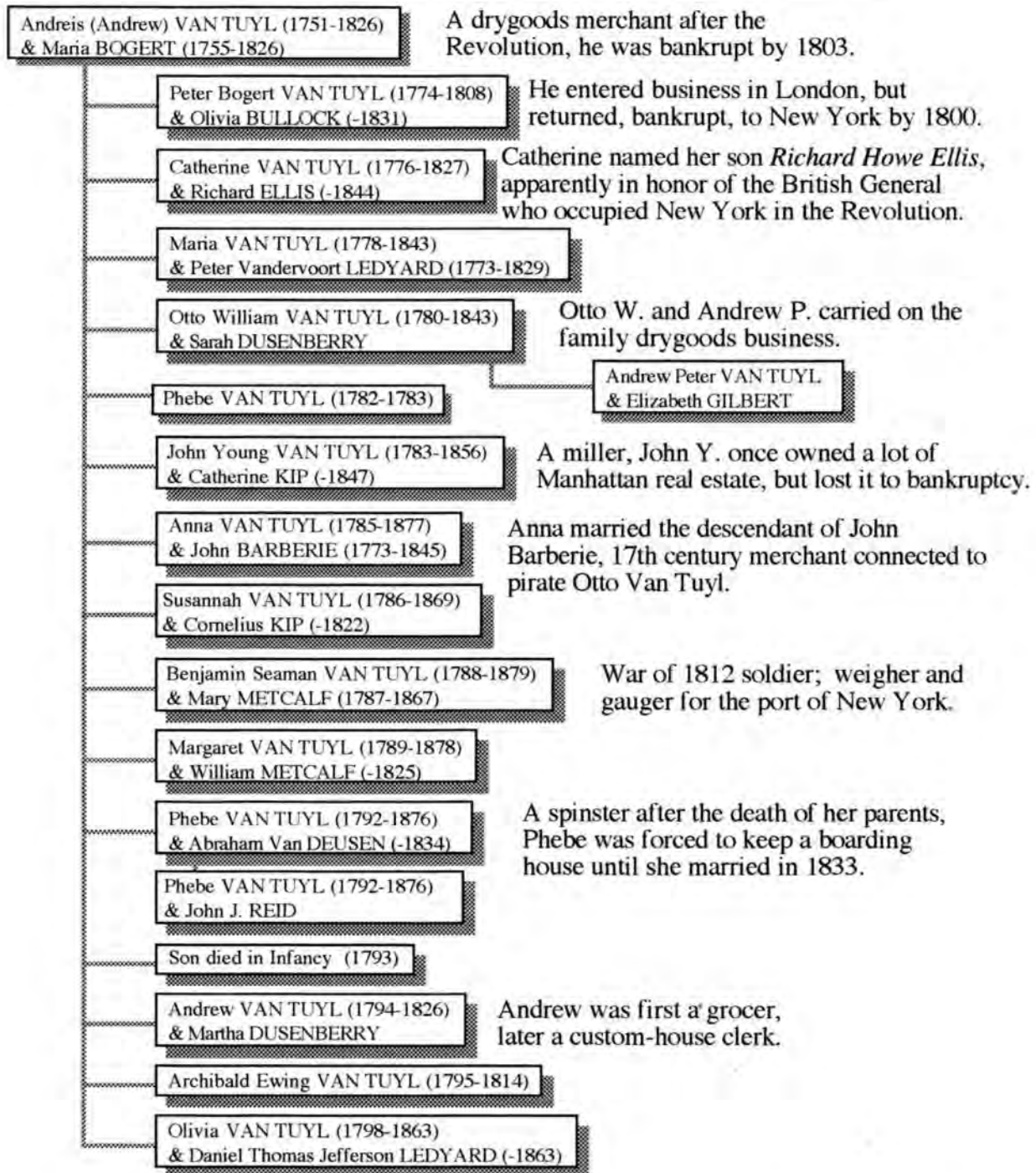
³⁷ NY City Directory, 1797-98. He is listed at 96 Maiden Lane, but this may be a misprint, since his establishment is listed thereafter, through 1803, as 94 Maiden lane.

³⁸ New-York Historical Society Manuscript collection. See under: Van Tuyl. Written in Andrew's hand.

³⁹ Smith, W., & Co., "List of Bankrupts 1786 - 1806," London, 1806. No page number.

⁴⁰ New-York Historical Society Manuscript collection. See under: Van Tuyl. Lenox was owed \$1650 on a promissory note dated 20 Oct., 1803.

The New York City Van Tuyls



Note that the Kip, Ledyard, Dusenberry, and Metcalf families each provided two spouses for the sons and daughters of Andrew and Maria Van Tuyl.

Andrew's Last Years

Andrew was only 52 years old at the time of his 1803 bankruptcy. Though he was never again listed as a businessman, it seems unlikely that he retired completely from the dry goods business. Perhaps he continued to work at the store, which was now officially owned by his sons. Andrew and Mary Van Tuyl survived until 1826, dying within months of one another. Further tragedy struck the family that year: their son Andrew died in May, and daughter Catherine Ellis the following February. Andrew and Mary, having nothing but their household goods to offer their heirs, did not have a will at the time of their deaths. The surviving children turned over the family household effects to the two unmarried sisters, Phebe and Olivia, and went about their New York City lives.⁴¹

The New Yorkers

By the time Andrew and Mary Van Tuyl died in 1826, their city had transformed itself from a sleepy colonial town into a growing metropolis whose evident destiny was to level the hills of Manhattan Island and cover them with buildings. As an 1825 newspaper envisioned it:⁴²

Greenwich is now no longer a country village. Such has been the growth of our city that the building of one block more will completely connect the two places; and in three years' time, at the rate buildings have been erected the last season, Greenwich will be known only as a part of the city, and the suburbs will be beyond it...

Of course, the "suburbs" of 1825 were to become the skyscraper-covered Manhattan of the 20th century; but throughout most of the 19th century, the only hint of that high-rise future was the rectangular grid of streets and avenues aligned with the island's north-west axis which planners had started mapping as early as 1817.⁴³ The New York City of 10,000 souls during the Revolution had exploded during the later years of Andrew Van Tuyl's life. By 1830 - just a few years after his death - New York had become a metropolis with 202,000 inhabitants.⁴⁴

So, how did the sons and daughters of Andrew and Mary Van Tuyl fare in this new metropolitan New York City? Catherine, the eldest daughter, survived her parents by just one year. Daughters Mary and Olivia married a Ledyard. Sister Phebe, a spinster who had been reduced to running a boarding house to sustain herself, married in 1833, only to be widowed a year later. She remarried in 1838 at age 46. Daughter Susannah [Susan] married into the Kip family, as had her older brother. After she was widowed, while living in Rahway, NJ, she was reduced to poverty, having to beg her brother Benjamin for money to pay for coal.⁴⁵ Daughter Margaret married a Metcalf, following the lead of her brother Benjamin. Anna Van Tuyl married John Barberie, the

⁴¹ Copy of a holographic quitclaim handed down through the descendants of Benjamin S. Van Tuyl. Apparently, Andrew and Mary's home at 58 Beekman St. was not part of their estate.

⁴² Stokes, I.N.P., "New York Past and Present...", 1939, pg. 77.

⁴³ "Map of the City of New York...by Thos. M. Poppleton, City Surveyor...1817," NY Public Library.

⁴⁴ Stokes, pg. 78.

⁴⁵ Benjamin Seaman Van Tuyl's records, handed down through the family to his descendants.

namesake and descendant of Huguenot merchant John Barberie, who had been associated with Otto Van Tuyl, the 17th century pirate.⁴⁶ Oldest son Peter had died in 1808, leaving the remnants of the family drygoods business to be run by Otto William Van Tuyl, who continued to operate it up until the time of his death in 1843.⁴⁷ Otto William's son, Andrew P. Van Tuyl, took over the business from his father. He specialized in lace [1844-53], hosiery [1853-54], and finally, *fancygoods* [1855-56].⁴⁸ Andrew's son, Andrew Jr., after trying the grocery business for a few years, turned to a job in the New-York custom house, apparently following in his uncle John's footsteps.⁴⁹ He died in 1826, the same year his parents passed away. He was only 32.

Finally, we profile two of the surviving sons of Andrew and Mary Van Tuyl, both of whom left interesting records of their involvement in 19th century New York: John Young Van Tuyl and Benjamin Seaman Van Tuyl.

The Man of Property

John Young Van Tuyl, who had married Catherine Kip, was listed as a *miller* in 1834-35 by the New York City Directory. But there was much more to his affairs than is indicated by his job title: it appears that John Young Van Tuyl was, among other things, an investor in Manhattan real estate. Starting in 1809, and continuing into 1846, John and Catherine engaged in some 10 purchases of land and no less than 32 sales - many of them being to relatives.⁵⁰ In 1845, something went awry, and John was - like his father before him - forced to declare bankruptcy. In November of that year, three valuable lots belonging to him were sold at auction for a price evidently well below market value: 14 dollars! ⁵¹ This real estate consisted of three lots near 35th St. and Second Ave., as well as three more lots on the north side of 42nd St. between 3rd Ave. and Broadway.⁵² Apparently, the bankruptcy law permitted John to be bankrupt as an individual, but as a legal unit with his wife, he was to remain solvent.⁵³ So, acting with his wife Catherine Kip, John sold 12 lots near 3rd Ave. and 40th St. on the open market in 1846 for \$6000 -

⁴⁶ See: *American Van Tuyl Genealogy*.

⁴⁷ New York City Directories. He apparently was in and out of the clothing business, having been listed as a *Block Paver* in 1840-41. But in his later years he operated the dry goods business at 42 Pearl St.

⁴⁸ New York City Directories. Andrew P. Van Tuyl, in later years sold *facings*, or *founder's facings*. Whatever these were, they were a success. This business, under his sons, continued to 1875.

⁴⁹ New York City Directories. John Young Van Tuyl also worked in the custom house.

⁵⁰ *Index of conveyances Recorded in the office of the Registrar of the city and county of New York, 1654-1857*. [NYGBS microfilm reel 5]

⁵¹ *New York County Deeds*, Liber 474, pg. 559. He was listed as "formerly [a] Miller".

⁵² The 42nd St. lots were nos. 65, 38, &39. Present-day properties in this area include: the Chrysler Building, Grand Central Terminal, and Times Square! Why the purchaser got these properties for only 14 dollars remains a mystery.

⁵³ This proceeding took place under the U.S. Uniform Bankruptcy Act of 1841, not the old NY law. John, the individual, was forced into another bankruptcy sale in 1848 [Liber 500, pg. 327].

presumably a fair price for the time.⁵⁴ This was the last property sale recorded for the couple. Catherine died the following year. Apparently, John's finances did not improve thereafter, because this man who had once owned a share of midtown Manhattan was forced to take a job as a clerk - even though he was then in his 60s - and to keep working until his death at age 73.⁵⁵

Perhaps the saddest evidence of John Young Van Tuyl's reduced financial circumstances comes from the record of sale for a piece of household furniture he made to a New York matron in May of 1847, in the midst of his financial crisis, and immediately following his wife's death:⁵⁶

Received New York December 30th, 1847 from Mrs. Mary Mower Wife of Mr. James B. Mower all of the City of New York, by the hands of James Lorimer Graham Esq. the sum of

~ ~ ~ ~ Twenty Dollars ~ ~ ~ ~

being the amount less Five Dollars : the said Mrs. Mary Mower agreed in the presence of her Daughter Catherine Ann Mower to pay me for a Double Chest of Drawers on the 14th day of May last in a few weeks from that time;

For certain reasons, one of which is my not wishing to cause the said Catherine to appear in Court, to prove the Contract and delivery of the article, induces me to submit to being wronged out of Five dollars. And if I ever trust their word hereafter where dollars and Cents are in question they may double the wrong if they can. ~

John Y. Van Tuyl

\$25.00

5.00 less for forfeit of word

\$20.00

It is truly sad to realize that this 64 year old bankrupt had been reduced to haggling over the sum of five dollars. Sadder still seems to have been his misfortune with his second wife: one Sarah Brower. Presumably, they were married *circa* 1848. It apparently did not last long. Family records indicate that the second Mrs. John Y. Van Tuyl "...deserted and went to California."⁵⁷

The Patriot Soldier

Benjamin Seaman Van Tuyl, it has been said, was named for a Tory.⁵⁸ If so, he must have greatly disappointed his Loyalist parents when, at the age of 18, he volunteered to take up arms against the British. He joined a militia unit - called the *Saratoga Rangers* - in 1806, and when the

⁵⁴ *New York County Deeds*, Liber 476, pg. 397.

⁵⁵ NY City directories list his address as the custom house, NY City, during the 1850s. In 1855-56, his occupation was specifically listed as *clerk*. His obituary tells us that he "...filled a highly responsible situation in the auditor's office" [Benj. S. Van Tuyl descendants papers].

⁵⁶ Benjamin Seaman Van Tuyl's records, handed down through the family to his descendants.

⁵⁷ Benjamin Seaman Van Tuyl's records, handed down through the family to his descendants.

⁵⁸ Benjamin Seaman of Staten Island was reportedly a Loyalist. Witnessing Benjamin Seaman Van Tuyl's baptism in 1788 was Henry Seaman, apparently a family friend of the Van Tuyls [NYGBR vol. XCI no. 2, April 1960, pg. 106].

country was invaded by the British in 1812, Benjamin went to war against England.⁵⁹ In 1813, the 25 year old Benjamin and the *Saratoga Rangers* - then stationed in Northumberland, Saratoga County, on the upper Hudson River - marched north to the Canadian border, ostensibly to establish a threatening force that would deter the British from invading New York. It was to be a purely defensive operation. But at the border, their commanding general asked for volunteers to go beyond the militia's stated mission: they would invade Canadian territory. Benjamin later recalled that "...but twenty five Men and officers...honored the call" - with himself being among the volunteers.⁶⁰ As it turns out, the invaders encountered no enemy, so Benjamin's foreign military service turned out to be brief and uneventful. In November of 1813, he and his fellow militiamen were mustered out at Albany.⁶¹ They bore the dubious distinction of having been among the few soldiers of the United States ever to have invaded Canada.

After his brief militia service, Benjamin Seaman Van Tuyl returned to New York City where, by 1820, he had established himself in the ropemaking trade. He later became the weighmaster and gauger for the ever-growing Port of New York, a trade he followed until his retirement in 1871. In order to obtain his appointment as U.S. Gauger for the Port of New York, Benjamin pulled a few political strings, first getting approval of his local political committee, then writing to President Lincoln - early in the Civil War - to recite his patriotic credentials:⁶²

When President Jefferson called for Volunteers to support the Laws of the Union, I was a member of the Saratoga Rangers... [of]...NY. We volunteered some from the City, some from the State...At the Chataque Corners Genl. Hampton called for Volunteers to enter Canada. I with twenty five of the Brigade Volunteered...My object in this recital is to solicit your approval and Order my appointment as U.S. Gauger for this Port [He got the job].

As New York City grew, Benjamin entered the vanguard of that city's future: he became a commuter! About 1858, having removed to the suburb of Brooklyn, he commuted by ferry from his Franklin Avenue home to his job on Manhattan's South Street waterfront.⁶³ Benjamin Seaman Van Tuyl lived to the age of 91, his long and successful life clearly free from the ups and downs his father and brothers had suffered.⁶⁴ In his simple way, he contributed significantly to the development of his country and his city, as the seaport he served grew throughout the 19th century

⁵⁹ Certificate of appointment: "*To Benjamin S. Vantuyl Greeting:*", 1806, to the First Light Infantry Regiment, Saratoga Ranger Company, NY Militia. [Benj. S. Van Tuyl descendants' papers].

⁶⁰ Letter of Benjamin S. Van Tuyl to Abraham Lincoln, August, 1861. Among the papers of the descendants of Benjamins Seaman Van Tuyl.

⁶¹ U.S. Bounty Land Claim 181145, War of 1812, sworn 16 May, 1855 in New York City.

⁶² Letter to Lincoln, August, 1861. Papers of the descendants of Benjamins Seaman Van Tuyl.

⁶³ New York City Directories, 1820-1872 [New-York Historical Society]. His business address per the Lincoln letter was 163 South St.

⁶⁴ Born 12 May, 1788, died 1 June, 1879. See *American Van Tuyl Genealogy*.

to become the gateway to the American continent. His tombstone remembered him as he probably would have wished to be remembered:⁶⁵

An honest man A sincere Christian A true patriot

Epilogue

In 1809, the 26 year-old youngest son of a New York family which imported hardware from England published his first book. It was a comic history of New York, whose fictional narrator, one Diedrich Knickerbocker, held forth on the snobbish attitudes of New York's emerging upper class. The now-famous author, Washington Irving, must certainly have been acquainted with the family, or at least the business, of Andrew Van Tuyl. So when Irving needed a Dutch name to round out a semi-poetic paragraph, he put down with perhaps uncanny insight, what could be considered a fitting epitaph for old Andrew Van Tuyl, merchant of New York, and his 19th century sons and daughters:⁶⁶

It is astonishing, moreover, to behold how many great families have sprung up of late years, who pride themselves excessively on the score of ancestry. Thus he who can look up to his father without humiliation assumes not a little importance - he who can safely talk of his grandfather, is still more vain-glorious, but he who can look back to his great grandfather, without stumbling over a cobbler's stall, or running his head against a whipping post, is absolutely intolerable in his pretensions to family - bless us! what a piece of work is here, between these mushrooms of an hour, and these mushrooms of a day!

For my part I look upon our old dutch families as the only local nobility, and the real lords of the soil - nor can I ever see an honest old burgher quietly smoking his pipe, but I look upon him with reverence as a dignified descendant from the Van Rensselaers, the Van Zandts, the Knickerbockers, and the Van Tuyls.

⁶⁵ The unpublished researches of Elizabeth Van Tuyl Ferry. The tombstones of the New York Van Tuyls no longer exist, having fallen to NY City development in the early 20th century.

⁶⁶ Irving, W., "A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty, by Diedrich Knickerbocker," 1809, Book VII, Chapter 1. Washington Irving's family had much in common with the Van Tuyls of New York. Hardware importers from England, they went bankrupt in about 1815 [*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., vol. 6. pg. 393-4]. In later editions of the book [1812, 1900], the Van Tuyl name was absent. Could it be that Irving's readers simply couldn't pronounce *Van Tuyl*?