



NEW-YE 'S DAY IN NEW AMSTERDAM IN THE OLD DUTCH TIMES.

**New Years Day in New Amsterdam in the Old Dutch Times** [*Frederick Burr Opper 1857-1937*, New York Public Library Collections. Used by Permission]. Surely, everyday life in that bleak colony was never so gay for actual residents like Jan Otten and Geertruyd Van Tuyl.

## Chapter 6

### Fugitive Immigrants 1663~1700

#### *Escape to Nieuw Netherland*

Captain Jan Bergen, being a veteran of the voyage to Nieuw Amsterdam, undoubtedly knew where the dangers of the passage lay. Of course there was the weather, which could blow a ship off course or demolish her rigging. But the weather was in God's hands, not his. As always, there was sickness - the scourge of so many ships - diseases which could decimate the passengers and crew. About this, too, there was nothing he could do. But on the Nieuw Amsterdam run there was one particular source of trouble that a captain could hope to control: the *passengers*. He had nearly a hundred of them on board this time, all bound for that pest-hole of a village in the New World whose reason for being eluded him. Who would go to such a place? It was a decaying outpost of a failing corporate enterprise, and it looked the part. No wonder it attracted so few settlers, and those it did were of such poor quality.

"*It is more suited for slaves than freemen...*" wrote Junker Adriaen van der Donck in his 1650 diatribe, "Of the Reasons and Causes why and how New Netherland is so decayed,"<sup>1</sup> and though things may have improved in the interim under Director-General Peter Stuyvesant, it was still not a place that attracted settlers. The mud-filled streets, full of refuse, were patrolled by pigs, whose scavenging kept the place from devolving into a garbage pit. The fort was in disrepair and the wall - that rampart which was supposed to protect the settlers from being overrun by New Englanders and offer some protection from the savage tribes surrounding the white man's enclave - the wall had been scavenged by the settlers themselves, ever in need of wood for their own private uses. And speaking of *slaves*, of those there were plenty! Many had been there from the beginning, doing hard labor for The Company.<sup>2</sup> Why any self-respecting Dutchman would want to live in such a place was a mystery.

So Captain Bergen's opinion of anyone foolish enough or desperate enough to go to Nieuw Amsterdam must have been a combination of contempt, pity, and suspicion. The conditions they would be forced to travel in were appalling. Cramped between decks like so much human cargo,

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<sup>1</sup> Van der Donck, Junker Adriaen (and Ten Others), "Of the Reasons and Causes why and how New Netherland is so decayed," in *The Representation of New Netherland (1650)*, *New York Historical Society Collections*, Second Series, II, 288 - 320. Compared to the English Colonies, the West India Company's trade outpost of *Nieuw Netherland* never did attract enough settlers to survive British encroachment.

<sup>2</sup> Kessler, Henry and Rachlis, Eugene, "Peter Stuyvesant and His New York," New York, Random House, 1959, pg. 22.

unable to stand, they endured the ship's constant pitching and rolling as well as the terrifying creaks and groans brought on by the storms which made them fear for their lives. In the suffocating semi-darkness of their confinement, subjected to the foul stench of pigs, horses and cows in the hold below them, they were forced to eat rations so unbearable that The Company specified punishment for complaining about the food, or for throwing it overboard. Illness was of course inevitable, and few ships reached port without a list of deceased passengers.<sup>3</sup> Typhus was a problem, along with dysentery and typhoid fever. If the voyage were protracted due to bad weather, scurvy and starvation took their toll.<sup>4</sup>

But the captain must have been most worried about the troublemakers, the ones who passed the time drinking, gambling and fighting. The Company had rules against passengers' carrying dice or cards without the captain's permission, and made it clear that gambling losses on board were not binding. Enforcement was difficult, but punishment was severe. Drunkenness and assault were punished by having the offender "...nailed to the mast with a knife through his hand and there remain until he draws it through." Murderers were thrown overboard alive, along with their dead victims.<sup>5</sup> The captain's trained eye must have surveyed his hundred or so passengers with interest and concern; they were, after all, his problem for the duration of the voyage. He noticed that about half of them were French-speakers: some Walloons, some Picards, and even one man from Paris, Pierre Richaird by name. He noted that one Jean Arion, from Montpellier, "...being very old and unable to support his family, was permitted [by The Company] to move with his family to the Islands." Captain Bergen would have noted the dozen or so single Dutchmen travelling with him, and the single women, Marretje Theunis from Beest; the servant girl travelling with Vrouw Elsje Barents; and the sister of Pierre Niu. There was always a potential problem with the young single men, especially with women around.<sup>6</sup> Whether he spotted the convicted murderer Jan Otten Van Tuyl as a troublemaker, we do not know. Perhaps this young man, travelling under the watchful eye of his wife Geertruyd, and with his baby son Otto in tow, was no problem for the captain on this voyage.

In those days, ships were towed from The Company's docks in Amsterdam, then piloted through the shallow harbor approaches and the Zuiderzee to the takeoff anchorage on the island of Texel.<sup>7</sup>

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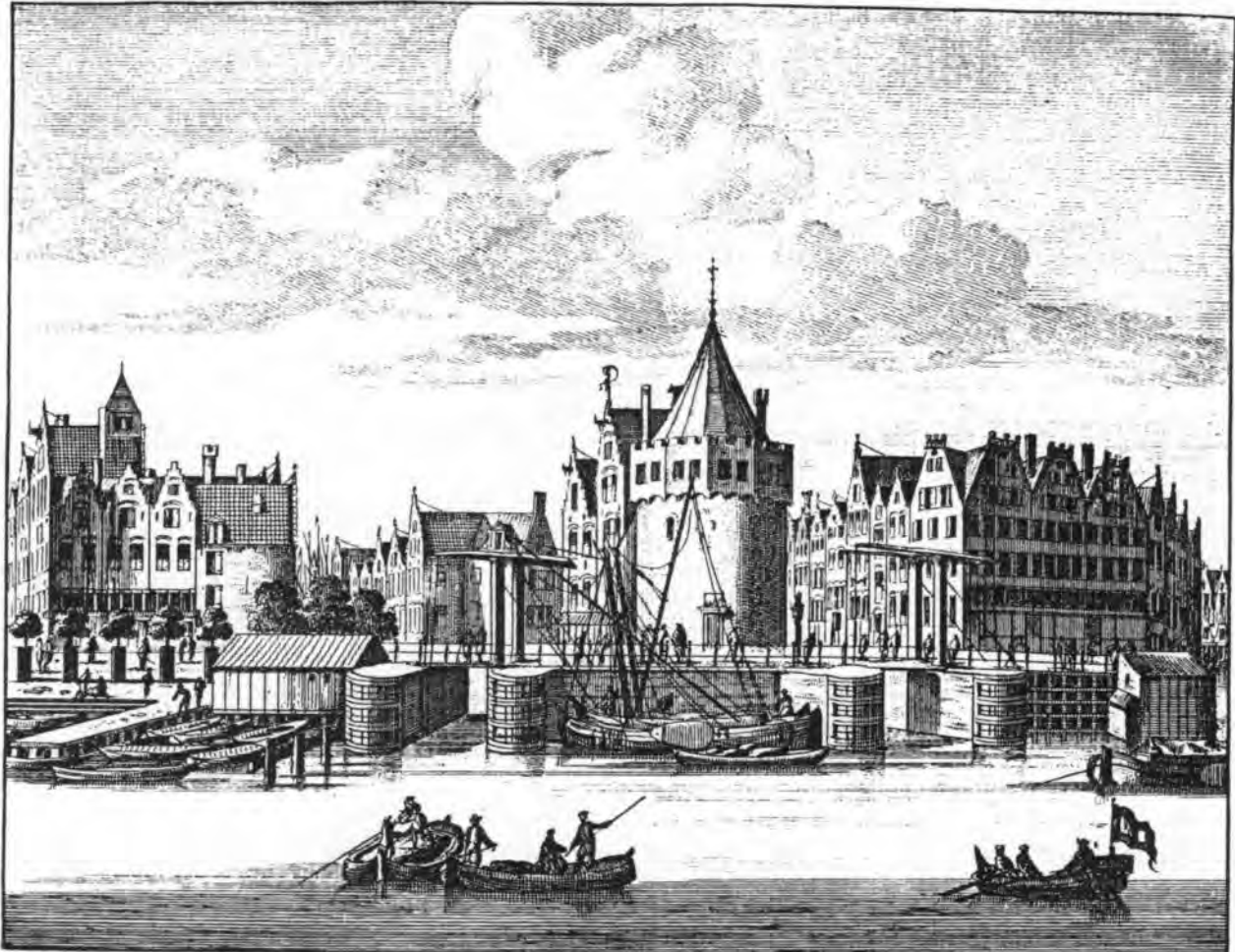
<sup>3</sup> Kessler and Rachlis, pg. 288, pp. 3 - 23, pg. 63.

<sup>4</sup> Archdeacon, Thomas, "Anglo-Dutch New York, 1676," in *New York, the Centennial Years*, [Ed. M. M. Klein], Kennikat Press, 1976, pp. 11-13.

<sup>5</sup> Kessler and Rachlis, pg. 288.

<sup>6</sup> Banta, Theodore M., "Passengers to New Netherland," in *Holland Society of New York Yearbook, 1902*, pp. 2 - 37. The fact that Jean Arion was bound for "The Islands" holds out the possibility that *De Bonte Koe* [The Spotted Cow], was intending a stopover in the West Indies before proceeding to Nieuw Amsterdam.

<sup>7</sup> Postma, J.M., "The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade 1600-1815," Cambridge University Press, 1990, Pg. 150.



*Discedentes classiaris DEFLENTIUM MULIER* | *De SCHREYERS Hoeks-Toren, in het Oosten, aan*  
*CULARUM Turris; ad Yam.* | *het 1<sup>o</sup>; geboud in het jaar 1482.*  
*P. Schenk sculpsit. Anst. G. Peur.*

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The *Schreyerstoren* [Crier's tower] of Amsterdam - the place where weeping women and other relatives stood to catch a last glimpse of their departing loved ones. Did anyone weep as Jan Otten, Geertruyd and Otto van Tuyl sailed off to America?

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After departing Amsterdam on 16 April, 1663, Captain Bergen would have headed his ship, *De Bonte Koe*, southward from Texel toward the Canary Islands, where he would pick up the westward winds and currents to the West Indies.<sup>8</sup> He may have visited the Canaries for water and fresh provisions, knowing that scurvy could set in after only 6 weeks without fresh food,<sup>9</sup> and that the voyage could take some 12 weeks in all. He possibly sailed in convoy with two other of The Company's ships, and may have stopped over at Curacao. Whatever the events of the voyage may have been, we know that by 9 July, 1663, *De Bonte Koe* arrived at Nieuw Amsterdam, one month behind the first two ships of the season.<sup>10</sup> Jan Otten Van Tuyl and his wife Geertruyd Janse had paid the not-insubstantial sum of 36 guilders apiece to make this voyage.<sup>11</sup> Surely, they hoped it would take them to a new life of opportunity - a fresh start. On the journey, their two-year-old baby, Otto, was experiencing the roll of a ship for the first time. It was the first sea voyage for him, but it would not be his last.

### *Nieuw Amsterdam*

As travellers in those days approached the colonial outpost at Manhattan Island's southern tip, they were impressed by the wildlife of the coastal waters, especially the whales and porpoises, and by the seemingly endless forests along the shore. They might have been boarded by Indians who, approaching in canoes, inspected the ship and its passengers before departing with gifts of food

and liquor.<sup>12</sup> Like the millions of immigrants who would follow them over the years to this magnificent harbor, the Van Tuyls must have been nervous and a little bit frightened. But unlike the huddled masses of later years who rejoiced in the sight of the Statue of Liberty, these 1663 immigrants must certainly have been unimpressed by the ramshackle town that greeted them. Situated at the southern tip of Manhattan Island, it housed 1500 residents living in some 300 houses on a piece of land half the area of the Van Tuyl's old neighborhood. Compared to Zaltbommel, with its sturdy stone walls, churches, town hall and harbor, the tiny Nieuw Amsterdam with its dirt streets and falling-down ramparts must have looked pathetic indeed. Zaltbommel, for example, boasted a magnificent cathedral-like church whose spire could be seen

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<sup>8</sup> De Wassenaar, N.J., "Founding of New Amsterdam (1623-1628)," in *NYHS Collections, Second Series*, //, pp. 288-320.

<sup>9</sup> Ritchie, R.C., "Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates", Harvard University Press, 1986, pg. 76.

<sup>10</sup> The Correspondence of Jeremias van Rensselaer 1651-1674 pg. 315, pp. 323-326.

<https://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/files/5613/5726/1704/JeremiasvanRensselaerCorrespondence.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Banta, pp. 3-4. The 17th century Dutch Guilder contained 19 grams of silver. One of history's most famous transactions was Peter Minuit's purchase of Manhattan Island from the Indians. The price was trade goods worth 60 guilders. [Kessler and Rachlis, pg. 282].

<sup>12</sup> Archdeacon 1676, pg. 12.

for miles. Nieuw Amsterdam's faithful worshipped in a crude wooden building on the grounds of the dilapidated "fort".<sup>14</sup>

Some things, however, were familiar. In many ways, the town had the appearance of its namesake city, Amsterdam. The houses were built in the Dutch city style, with tile roofs whose stairstep-gabled end faced the street. Like homes in The Netherlands, ironwork numbers were often attached to the masonry walls, identifying the year in which the house was built.<sup>15</sup> Nieuw Amsterdam even boasted a canal, the *Heere Gracht*, similar to Amsterdam's in both design and name.<sup>16</sup> The people were mostly Dutch, or at least Dutch-oriented and Dutch-speaking. But the town was astonishing in its variety of nationalities and languages. Twenty years earlier, with the population standing at barely 500 people, a traveller estimated that he heard some eighteen languages being spoken. There were Northern Europeans of all types; from France, Poland, Germany, England, and The Netherlands. A small contingent of *Marranos* - Portuguese Jews who were outwardly Christian but secretly practiced Judaism - had settled in the colony, and were allowed to own property and engage in commerce. While Jan and Geertruyd may have experienced the cosmopolitan nature of a city during their brief stay in Amsterdam and thus not been too surprised at the variety of Europeans they saw in this colonial outpost, they must certainly have been unprepared for the large numbers of Black Africans and exotic Native American "Indians" they saw in town.<sup>17</sup>

The first priority for all the new settlers was finding a place to live. Those who had come to farm would soon be headed up the North [Hudson] River to *Esopus* [Kingston] or *Rensselaerwick* [Albany environs], or out to *Lang Eylandt* [Long Island]; those who wanted to trade with the Indians would be travelling to *Fort Orange* [Albany]; those who sought their living in the "city"

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<sup>14</sup> The area of Manhattan in 1663 was about 12.8 hectares [12.9 *morgens*]. The inhabited portion of Gameren comprised about 170 hectares, 13 times the size of Manhattan. The south side of Burgersteeg in Gamereen fronted on farms containing roughly 30 hectares, twice the area of Manhattan. Manhattan's population was 1500, with "less than 350 men" [Stokes, I.N. P., "New York Past and Present," New York Hist. Soc. 1939, pg. 67]. Using known ratios from later years, we estimate about 200 negroes, 1300 whites. Manhattan had about 300 houses in 1660. [Kouwenhoven, J. A., "The Columbia Historical Portrait of New York", Doubleday, 1953, pg. 41]. Zaltbommel had a population of about 4000 in this period, with some 900 houses.

<sup>15</sup> Archdeacon 1676, pg. 13. Dutch farm houses were built on a sturdy timber frame which supported the thatched roof. The brick walls were anchored to this frame with ironwork. It became customary to embellish these iron anchors by fashioning them into a decorative shape, often the date of construction. This custom carried over to urban houses, and is even used in Dutch houses of today.

<sup>16</sup> Kouwenhoven, J. A., "The Columbia Historical Portrait of New York", Doubleday, 1953,

<sup>17</sup> Archdeacon 1676, pg. 27-29. Stuyvesant had denied the Jews residence, but was overruled by the West India Company, which had Jewish investors. The *Marranos* had fled to Holland in the late 1500s, emigrated to New Holland [Brazil] in the early 1600s. They were forced to seek refuge in New Amsterdam at the time of the Portuguese conquest of Brazil in 1654. Blacks had first come as Company slaves from Brazil in 1626. In 1663, some were freemen, but most of the 200 or so Africans were slaves. Some Indians were kept as slaves in New Netherland.

would stay in *Nieuw Amsterdam*. Jan Otten Van Tuyl fell into this latter category. Geertruyd, from what we can infer about her, must have been a very active and determined woman, and as a young mother must have been most insistent on finding good accommodations for her family. But how could this be done? One hundred seventy seven men, women, and children had just arrived at the port within the last month. Though some of them, like Grietje Hendricx (who arrived aboard *De Roseboom* on 15 March to take up residence with her husband in Esopus), were only briefly in town, but many others were still in residence, looking for opportunities within the colony. There were many taverns and inns in this seaport town, of course, but we can imagine Geertruyd's distaste for such accommodations, not to mention the practical impossibility of these hostleries accommodating this huge influx of immigrants. So the Van Tuyls, along with many others, probably sought accommodation with one of the many resident families who took in paying boarders.<sup>18</sup>

Jan Otten, though a farmer's son, decided not to move out to one of the farming communities, but to get what work he could within the town. He had no trade and knew nothing of business, but had grown up along the river *Waal*, so he must have known boats. There was plenty of water borne commerce within the colony, both in the bay and up the Hudson River, and Jan Otten found his place as a waterman, working on small craft. If he ever went to sea, it was for brief intervals, because Geertruyd produced a new child about every 2-3 years, starting with her first daughter, Neeltje, in November of 1664, and ending with her twins, Abraham and Isaac, in January, 1681. The growing family's finances, which could not have been very healthy to begin with, were certainly not helped when Jan's employer, Nicolaes Davis, died and his estate in 1672 failed to pay Jan Otten some 80 Guilders of wages owed him.<sup>19</sup>

By 1686, New York City had grown to house 3800 people in some 450 houses. Sometime before 1687 Jan Otten and Geertruyd moved into a modest house in what was then the less-prestigious part of town: Wall Street. Their house was on the southern side, facing "The Wall"- or "*De Singel*", as it was called - on the north side. This wall had been built in 1653, 10 years before their arrival in the colony, under orders of Director-General Peter Stuyvesant, who was fearing an

<sup>18</sup> Archdeacon 1676, pg. 14. Those who took in boarders probably siphoned off many of the *guilders* brought by the immigrants. The colony was so cash-starved that they resorted to using *sewant* [also called *wampum*], a form of currency made from seashells by the Indians.

<sup>19</sup> Cramer, Alma H., "Notes on the Van Tuyl Family", 1959, pg. 1. The children were: Otto, b. ca. 1661 in Gamenen; Neltje, bap. 16 Nov., 1664; Elizabeth, bap. 30 Jan., 1667; Anna [Antje] bap. 7 April, 1672; Aert, bap. 27 Jan., 1675; Alexander, bap. 2 Aug., 1677, d. young; Abraham and Isaac, b. 5 Jan., 1681. All but Otto were born in New York City. Parsons ["Peter Van Pelt," in *The American Genealogist*, v. 50, pp. 210-213; v. 51, pp. 42-43] has speculated that there were two other sons, Cornelius and Gerrit. Although printed records of the *Will of Daniel DeHart* [NYHS Abstract of Wills, vol. 25, pg. 306] produce the names Cornelius and Gerrit Van Tuyl [making no reference to relationship], examination of the original will Liber has shown to our satisfaction that these are errors of transcription to the printed form [See: NY County Wills, 1693-1733, Liber V, pg. 339 (NYGBS microfilm)]. All the children listed above appear in birth/baptismal records *and* in the 1704 will of Otto Van Tuyl.

invasion from New England.<sup>20, 21, 22</sup> Originally, the wall consisted of:<sup>23</sup>

*Round palisades twelve feet in length, eighteen inches in girth and sharpened at the top...interrupted at intervals of a rod by posts twenty-one inches in circumference, to which split rails were nailed two feet below the top of the palisades. A sloping breastwork three feet wide at the top and four at the bottom and four feet high was then thrown up inside the palisades and against them.*

But the severe winters and the city's ever-rooting pigs conspired to degrade the wall, putting it in constant need of repair. In addition, the wall was found to be ineffective against Indians, who could readily surmount the palisades. In 1655, while Stuyvesant and his soldiers were absent, a group of Indians easily overran the town. So, immediately afterward, in an effort to "Indian-proof" the wall, boards were nailed to it in such a way that they extended 10 or 12 feet above the palisades in what must have been a truly unsightly mess. The wall, though repeatedly repaired through the years, proved no useful defense against the English conquest of 1664 or the Dutch reconquest of 1673. By 1687, when Governor Dongan ordered a survey, he found that the wall was mostly down, its wood apparently scavenged by the good burghers for their own uses.<sup>24</sup> Throughout the 1680s and 90s, during the time the Van Tuyl family lived there, Wall Street was in a continual process of upgrading. Wall Street finally got pavement in 1693, long after most of the town. The cobblestones extended some 10 feet from each house toward the center of the street.<sup>25</sup> In theory, this left the center of the street free to act as a storm drain.<sup>26</sup> By 1699, with the wall gone and pavement added, the neighborhood was further upgraded when New York got its new City Hall on the north side of Wall Street. But by this time, the Van Tuyls were no longer resident *Langs de Wal*.

### ***Enter the English***

Peter Stuyvesant, who seemed to run every detail of The Company's Colony personally, was out of town in August of 1664, dealing with some Indian problems at Fort Orange. He returned to Nieuw Amsterdam on August 25 to find the situation desperate. English colonel Richard Nicholls was sailing into the bay with as many as two thousand armed men in four British frigates, and Stuyvesant suspected additional ground troops were coming down from New England.

<sup>20</sup> Selyns, Domine Henricus and Abeel, G., "Records of New York 1686-7," in *Collections of the Holland Society of New York*, vol. V, 1916, pg. 5, pg. 49.

<sup>21</sup> City of New York, "Tax Lists of the City of New York, December, 1695 - July 15th, 1699," in *Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1910*" pp. 20, 54, 72, 244, 258, 300. Throughout this period, Jan Otten's house was assessed at £25, in the mid-range of the typical home assessments for the North Ward, the poorest district of the city proper by 1703 [Rothschild, pg. 113].

<sup>22</sup> Kessler and Rachlis, pg. 131. Ironically, in 1664, it was the useless condition of the *fort* which rendered the city defenseless, since the invasion came by sea.

<sup>23</sup> Villard, O.G., "The Early History of Wall Street," in *Historic New York, The Half Moon Papers, series I, vol. I*, 1897, pg. 81. [Reissued 1969 by Ira J. Friedman, Inc].

<sup>24</sup> Villard, pp. 81-84, 91.

<sup>25</sup> Villard, pg. 92.

<sup>26</sup> Archdeacon 1676, pg. 20.



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When asked his intentions, Nicholls replied:<sup>27</sup>

*In his Majestie's Name, I do demand the Towne, Scituate upon the Island commonly known by the Name of Manhattoes with all the forts thereunto belonging, to be rendered unto his Majestie's obedience, and Protection into my hands.*

Food supplies were short, due to poor harvest, and this was exacerbated by the arrival ten days earlier of a ship carrying 290 slaves who, along with the 1500 residents of the town, needed to be fed. Gunpowder and lead were in short supply. Stuyvesant's situation was hopeless, though he wouldn't admit it. He tried to rally the citizens to mount a defense, but could get no support. On 5 September, ninety-three of the town's leading citizens - and Stuyvesant's own son - petitioned him to surrender. On 8 September, Stuyvesant capitulated and Nicholls marched in, proclaiming the town would henceforth be known as *New Yorke*.<sup>28</sup>

Nicholls' terms of surrender were generous. He promised replacement of The West India Company's government with that of King Charles II (a not unpopular action in the minds of the Dutch colonists who had chafed under Company rule). He promised the maintenance of existing city government for the time being, and that religious freedom would be maintained (enhanced, as it turned out). Most importantly, property would not be confiscated, and Dutch inheritance laws and customs would be respected. In addition, colonists would gain the right to trade with England and her colonies, and would not have to bear arms against any foreign nation. Altogether, it was an excellent deal for the commerce-minded Dutch citizens of the colony.<sup>29</sup>

But in Europe, international rivalries erupted in 1665 into the second in a series of Anglo-Dutch wars. Dutch Admiral de Ruyter was dispatched by the States-General [Dutch government] to:

*...inflict damage on that nation [England] as much as possible, at Barbados or the New Netherlands, New Foundland and other places.*<sup>30</sup>

De Ruyter could have chosen to recapture Nieuw Netherland under the terms of his orders, but chose not to. Perhaps this was a reflection of the relative importance accorded Nieuw Netherland compared to Barbados, where he *did* attack in April of 1665.<sup>31</sup> A third Anglo-Dutch war erupted in 1672. Undoubtedly, ethnic patriotism was excited among the colonists as a result of these wars, and many colonists welcomed the appearance, in 1673, of Dutch warships in New York harbor. The city yielded readily, and was rechristened *New Orange*. The difference now was that the colony was under the direct rule of The States-General, not the West India Company - a circumstance much approved by the Dutch inhabitants of the colony. Dutch forms of government,

<sup>27</sup> Kessler and Rachlis, pg. 259.

<sup>28</sup> Kessler and Rachlis, pp. 259 - 269.

<sup>29</sup> Archdeacon, Thomas, "New York City, 1664 - 1710, Conquest and Change," Cornell University Press, 1976, pp. 97-98.

<sup>30</sup> Verhoog, P. and Koelmans, L., "De Reis van Michiel Adriaanszoon De Ruyter in 1664-1665," in *Werken Uitgegeven Door de Linschoten-Vereeniging LXII*, Den Haag, 1961, pp. 20-21.

<sup>31</sup> Verhoog, pg. 90

which had gradually been Anglicized over the past decade, reappeared in New Orange. But the situation was only temporary. In February of 1674, the Dutch returned New Orange to the British as part of the settlement ending the third Anglo-Dutch war. Governor Edmund Andros was sent out to make a few changes. He set about the systematic reduction of the lingering Dutch influence over the colony. Henceforth, official and legal matters would be handled exclusively in the English Language, and Dutch ships would be forbidden to trade with New York. The English jury system was introduced for the first time, and it was one element of a culture clash which heightened inter-ethnic tensions.<sup>32</sup>

Under pressure from New York City merchants, Governor Andros did establish a monopoly on overseas trade for the City, much to the disgust of merchants in Albany, who wanted to trade their beaver pelts directly with Europe, not through a New York City middleman. Also, Andros established a monopoly for New York City on the *bolting* [i.e. sifting and packing for export] of flour.<sup>33</sup> Both these monopolies must have helped the Hudson River trade on which Jan Otten Van Tuyl depended for his livelihood. Nonetheless, New York City did not fare well economically. In the years 1676 - 1695, the assessed valuation of real and personal property dropped by nearly a factor of two, and the price of wheat fell also.<sup>34</sup> This economic contraction in the face of population increase could mean only one thing: increased economic pressures on the working classes such as the ever-growing [until 1681] family of Jan Otten Van Tuyl.

With the arrival of Governor Thomas Dongan in 1683, and the "Dongan Charter" of 1686, new rights were granted to the citizens of New York - among them was the right to *elect* city officials. Things calmed down for a while until, in 1688, King James II (formerly Duke of York and now The Colony's proprietor) decided to merge New York into a larger entity - the "Dominion of New England"- under the governance of the unpopular Edmund Andros. This move was greeted no more enthusiastically in New England than in New York, and Andros was deposed in Boston just as momentous events were taking place in England. William III of Orange, Stadholder of The Netherlands - an arch Protestant - marched into England at the head of his army and deposed the Catholic King James II. A power vacuum developed in New York due to a weak Lt. Governor, Francis Nicholson. When a militia captain named Jacob Leisler seized control, Nicholson sailed for England, leaving the coup leader in charge. Thus started one of the most important political events in the history of the American Colonies... *Leisler's Rebellion*.<sup>35</sup>

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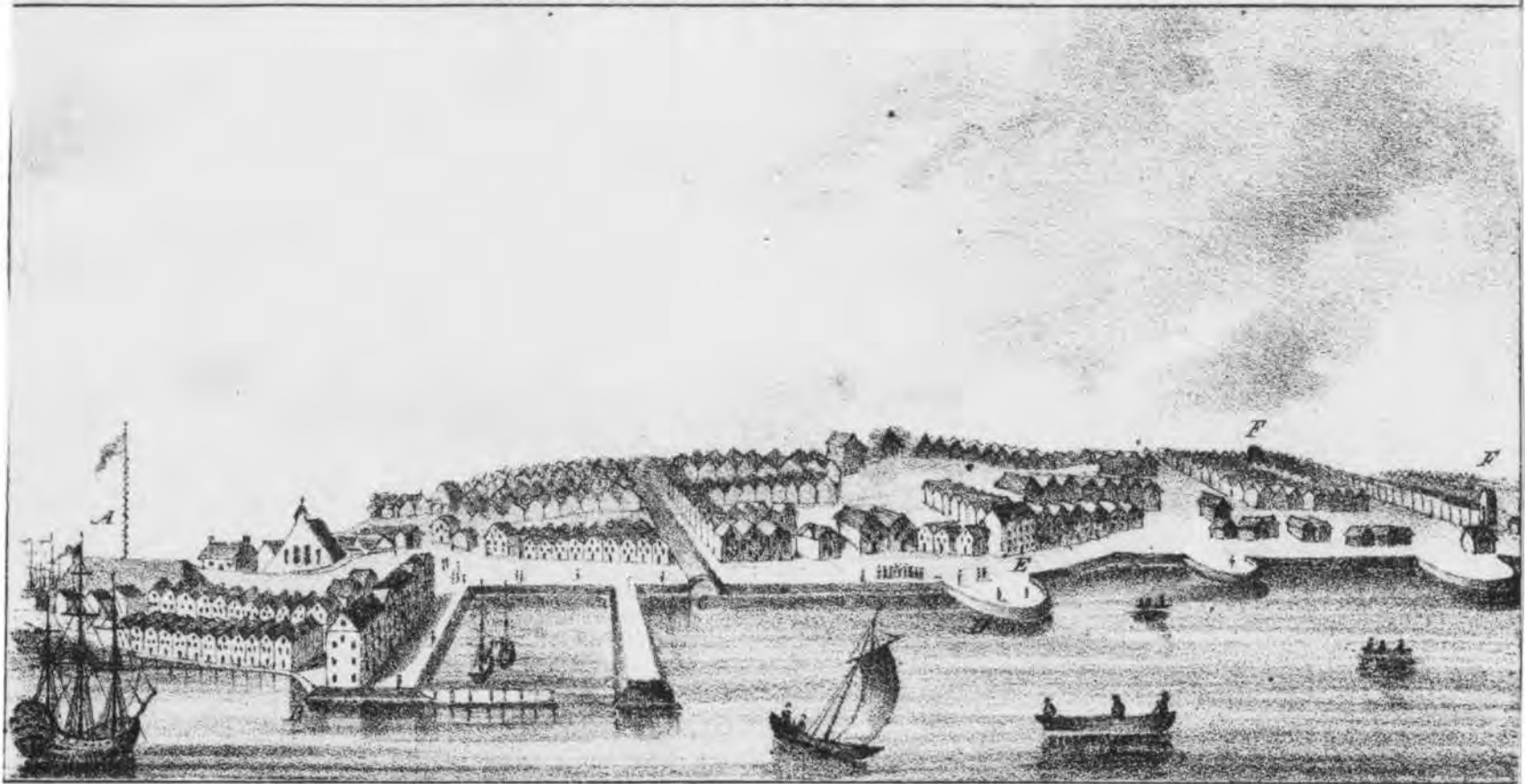
<sup>32</sup> Archdeacon, pp. 100-102.

<sup>33</sup> Leder, L.H., "Robert Livingston 1654-1728 and the Politics of Colonial New York," University of North Carolina Press, 1961, pg. 57.

<sup>34</sup> Leder, pp. 57-58.

<sup>35</sup> Archdeacon 1664-1710, pp. 100-107.

*The City of New Orange, 1673, as then sketched.*



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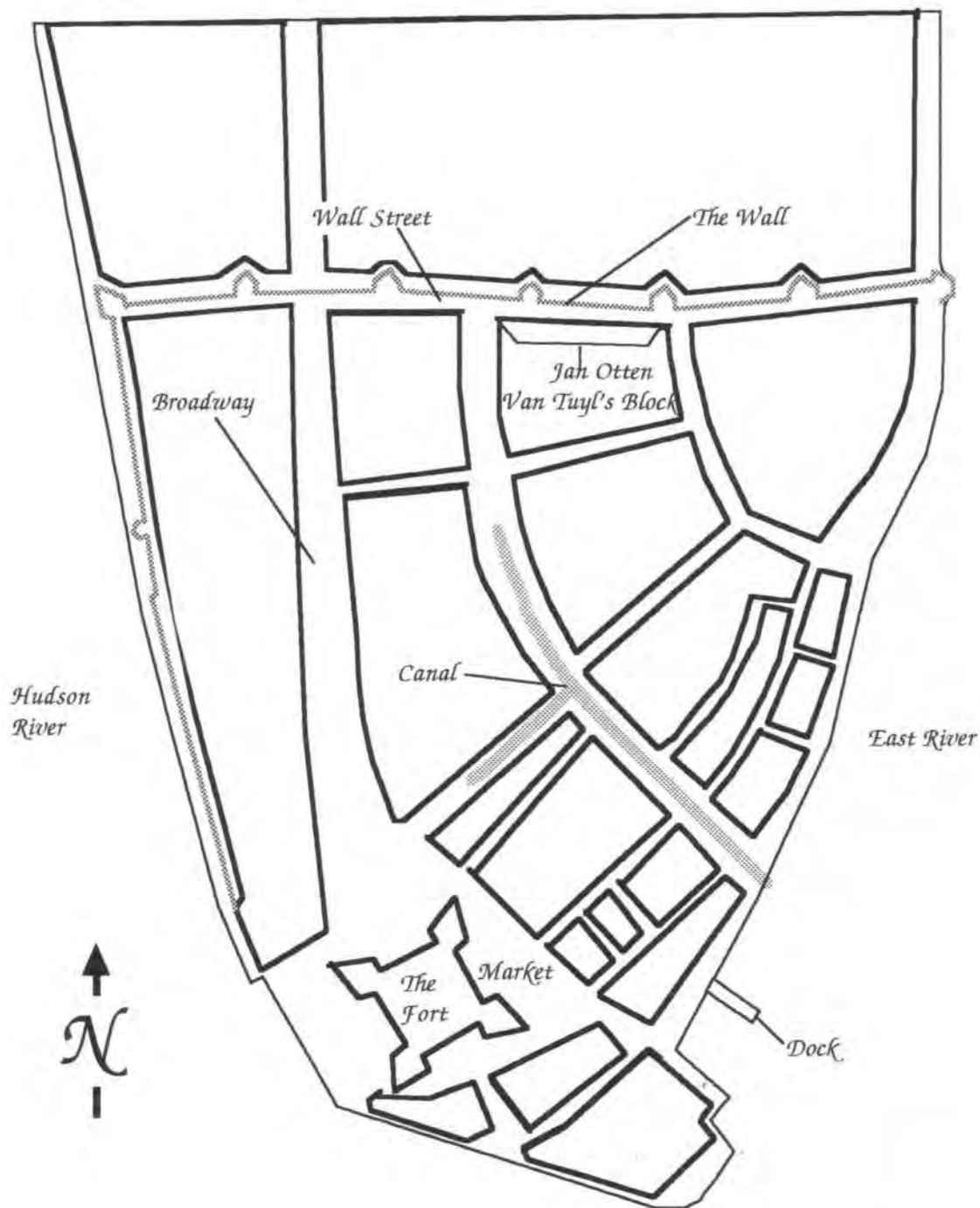
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*A the Fort & Church, - B Governor's house & the dock - C the Canal in Broad St. - D. Bendeel or Battery - E. Stadt-huys - F. Gate Wall on Wall St.*

Ten years after Jan Otten and Geertruyd Van Tuyl arrived in Manhattan, this was how the City looked. Temporarily, the Dutch had recaptured it, renaming it *New Orange*. The poorer part of town - where the Van Tuyls lived - was to the north, along a wooden security wall, on what is now called *Wall Street*. These 17th century Van Tuyls lived at, or near, the site of today's *New York Stock Exchange*. Drawing: *The City of New Orange, 1673, as then sketched* [Eno Collection, New York Public Library, Used by Permission].



# The Van Tuyl's New York City



Map After: "Castello Plan," Drawn by Jacques Cortelyou circa 1663. Residence location inferred from Tax Lists and Domine Selyn's Records.

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Since the reestablishment of English rule in 1674, the English had increased in numbers and influence in New York. Nevertheless, tax records of 1677 suggest the Dutch were still in control of the city's commerce.<sup>36</sup> However, by 1688, the balance of power was starting to shift. British merchants who had business or family connections in England were at a distinct competitive advantage. Scottish-born businessman Robert Livingston, for example, was now among the advantaged "English" merchants of New York. To further aggravate matters, some 200,000 Huguenots were expelled from France in 1685, and many of their merchant classes with shipping experience fled temporarily to England (where they established business contacts) thence to New York.<sup>37</sup> With the continual influx of non-Dutch immigrants with better business connections and higher social status than themselves came a great uneasiness among the Dutch residents of Manhattan. So by 1688, when the Dutchman William III of Orange took power in England, the Dutch citizens of New York whose status and wealth had eroded under English rule saw an opportunity to assert themselves.

Jacob Leisler was the personification of what had happened to New York's Dutch population. Economically successful (he was the sixth richest man in town) and desirous of political power, he found himself bypassed because of his affiliations with the old Dutch elite. So, when opportunity knocked in the form of a vacillating Lieutenant Governor, Leisler saw his chance and seized upon it. He held power for almost two years - a power based almost entirely on support from the Dutch masses, whose hopes that William of Orange would restore Dutch rule to the colony he cleverly exploited. While he was popular with the common folk, he was the scourge of the Anglicized merchant classes, inciting mob violence against them, confiscating their property, and even imprisoning them. Many merchants simply got out of town for their own protection during the Leisler years. In March, 1690, King William's and Queen Mary's representative, Henry Sloughter, arrived with a Man-of-War to take charge. Leisler was imprisoned and eventually hanged for treason, but the resentment he represented against English colonial rule would continue to fester for another 100 years, culminating eventually in the America Revolution. For the next couple of decades, New York politics became a complicated blend of England's Whigs - vs - Tories struggle mixed with New York's own ethnically-motivated conflict between "Leislerian" (Dutch) and "Anti- Leislerian" (English) factions.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Archdeacon 1664-1710, pg. 59.

<sup>37</sup> Archdeacon 1664-1710, pp. 42-43. Many were from La Rochelle and the nearby Isle de Ré. They settled in New York City, and also founded New Rochelle, New York. Among the important Huguenot merchants were two who will figure prominently in our story: Stephen DeLancey and John Barberie.

<sup>38</sup> Archdeacon 1664-1710, pp. 85 - 122. Though not Dutch by birth, Leisler was a Calvinist who had been thoroughly assimilated by the Dutch of Nieuw Amsterdam. In 1663, he married Elsje Tymens, the widow of wealthy merchant Pieter Cornelisen Van der Veen. This connected him by marriage to the Loockermans and Van Cortlandts, important and wealthy Dutch families.

***The Van Tuyls of New York***

From her home overlooking remnants of *The Wall* to the front side and her gardens to the back, Geertruyd Van Tuyl walked a quarter mile on weekdays to the market, which was held in the fort. In the years between 1663 and 1695, Manhattan gained three new markets, all along the East River where farmers could bring their produce by boat for direct sale to the city folk. While their wives and children sold produce, the farmers could relax in one of the city's 13 or so taverns - many of them standing along the waterfront.<sup>39</sup> In many ways, New York had grown into a somewhat smaller and much-less-grand version of Zaltbommel.<sup>40</sup> Both cities lay on a river, and both were serviced by outlying farm villages - Gameren in the case of Zaltbommel, and New Utrecht in the case of Manhattan. In those early years, though, each Manhattan householder had some "estate" on which food - perhaps fruits and vegetables and a few animals - could be raised. Some followed the Dutch tradition of raising flowers in small decorative beds or boxes. But most food had to be brought into the City. Occasionally, wild fowl would be brought in, usually to be consumed by the more well-to-do citizens. And New York Harbor was blessed with one of the world's finest oyster beds which, until its depletion in the 18th century, provided a delicacy for the residents. From the bay came also fish - mostly sheepshead and striped bass - to supplement the primary diet of beef, pork and mutton.<sup>41</sup> Certainly, that New World delicacy called Indian Corn, or maize, would have been available to Geertruyd. And tobacco, of course - that great American contribution to civilization so warmly embraced by the Dutch. In 1678 an English chaplain noted that:<sup>42</sup>

*The Dutch are obstinate and incessant smokers, whose diet, especially of the boorish sort, being sallets and brawn and very often pickled buttermilk, require the use of that herb [tobacco] to keep their phlegm from coagulating and curdling.*

Early Nieuw Amsterdam houses were built of wood, with thatched roofs, not unlike Dutch farmhouses of the time. However, as the town became ever more urbanized, and as population grew, it took on a more permanent appearance. Buildings were increasingly being constructed of brick - in emulation of a Dutch city. And Nieuw Amsterdam, of course, had its Dutch canals. But after the British took over for the second time (1673), the canals were filled in. And as more and more houses were built to accommodate the boom in export business brought about by the City's trade monopolies of 1678 and 1680, many houses of "Dutch" architecture were replaced.<sup>43</sup> Geertruyd's home would likely have been a modest Dutch style house, given the predominately Dutch background of the Wall St. neighborhood of her time.

<sup>39</sup> Rothschild, Nan A., "New York City Neighborhoods," Academic Press, 1990, pp. 56-70.

<sup>40</sup> By the turn of the 18th century, New York had increased to some 4000 inhabitants in 500 houses [Selyns, pg. 49], about the same number of people as lived in the Zaltbommel of Geertruyd's childhood (4000 people in 900 houses ca. 1640). [de Groot, J.H., "Zaltbommel, stad en Waard Door de Eeuwen Heen," Zaltbommel, 1979]

<sup>41</sup> Rothschild, pp. 144-149.

<sup>42</sup> Earle, Alice Morse, "Colonial Days in Old New York," Scribner's, 1896, pg. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Rothschild, pp. 7-12.

Ironically, the English takeover had opened the door to *increased* tolerance of religious practice... at least toward Christian denominations. Under Stuyvesant, Catholics and Jews were tolerated as long as they worshipped privately. Now, under the Catholic Duke of York, priests could perform services openly for what few Catholics there were.<sup>44</sup> In 1663 and up until 1693, the town's only chapel, named for the City's patron Saint Nicholas, was located in the fort.<sup>45</sup> It housed the Dutch Reformed services, as well as French Calvinist and Anglican congregations.<sup>46</sup> As Governor Thomas Dongan described religious life in New York:<sup>47</sup>

*Here bee not many of the Church of England; a few Roman Catholicks; abundance of Quakers preachers men & Women especially; Singing Quakers, Ranting Quakers, Sabbatarians; Antisabbatarians; Some Anabaptists some Independents; some Jews; in short of all sorts of opinions [i.e. religions] there are some, and the most part of none at all.*

Geertruyd, of course, joined the Dutch Church and raised her children in that Calvinist denomination. Along with the majority of Dutch *men* in town, Jan Otten did not become a member of his wife's congregation.<sup>48</sup> An early minister is quoted as saying "...[the colonists] *are very ignorant in true religion, and very much given to drink.*"<sup>49</sup> We don't know if Jan Otten maintained his fondness for tavern life, but he apparently stayed clear of the authorities - and the Church - throughout his life in the New World. For a mother with sons to raise and daughters to marry off, the Church was a source not only of spiritual sustenance and social contact, but marriage prospects as well. It was the clear custom of the time, especially among the Dutch, to seek marriage within their own ethnic and religious group.<sup>50</sup>

Most likely, Geertruyd's first, and certainly most important, social contact dated back to 1663, when she probably met and befriended Grietje Jans, an experienced mother who would have been in her late 30s with children ranging in age from 18 down to 2 years. Grietje was the wife of Teunis Jansen Van Pelt, a farmer and fisherman from the province of Liège (which lay along the river Maas) who had arrived in Nieuw Amsterdam just one month before the Van Tuyls. Teunis soon settled his family across the East River, near the village of New Utrecht on Long Island, and

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<sup>44</sup> Kessler and Rachlis, pg. 171, 176-186. See Archdeacon 1676, pp. 27-29, regarding Jews.

<sup>45</sup> Kouwenhoven, pg. 41.

<sup>46</sup> Rothschild, pg. 44. Protestant worship was tolerated, but Catholics and Jews had to pray in private.

<sup>47</sup> Dongan, Thomas, "Condition of New York in 1687," in *The Documentary History of the State of New-York*, E. B. O'Callaghan, Ed., Albany, 1850.

<sup>48</sup> Selyns, pg. 5. The list of church members for Wall St. shows nine men who were not church members, even though their wives, and in some cases children, were. Only four men attended church with their wives.

<sup>49</sup> Kessler and Rachlis, pg. 10.

<sup>50</sup> Archdeacon 1664 -1710, pg. 47.

with the help of his four oldest sons over the years built a prosperous family farm and fishery.<sup>51</sup> Grietje's youngest boy, Aert Teunisen Lannen Van Pelt, probably brought the family's produce into Manhattan to sell to the housewives there. We might imagine that the oldest Van Tuyl daughter, Neeltje, met Aert while buying produce from him. In any event, Aert Van Pelt married Neeltje in 1686 and took her to live in New Utrecht, where he built her a beautiful stone house. Theirs would be the first of several important Van Tuyl - Van Pelt marriages.<sup>52</sup> When Geertruyd's oldest son, Otto, finally married in 1693, at the age of 32, he wed Margrietje, daughter of church member Lysbeth Lubberts, the now-remarried widow of Dirck Fluyt.<sup>53</sup> The following year, 28-year-old Elizabeth married shipwright William Pell and her younger sister Anna, at age 22 married Cornelius Vandeventer.<sup>54</sup>

Jan Otten Van Tuyl was, during his years in New York, a financially-pressed working man, living in the Dutch working-class section of town with his growing family to provide for. His oldest son, Otto, would have needed a trade. Jan undoubtedly took the boy along on boat trips, probably from an early age, so that he could pick up the mariner's craft. Apparently, the Hudson river was a good training ground. Besides their up-river traffic, Dutch *schippers* ran ferries across the river, using 100-ton sloops of the flat-bottomed, rounded-stern Dutch design:<sup>55</sup>

*Leaning on heavy tillers, [the schippers - "skippers"] took every advantage of shifts in wins and tides and of every twist of the current around river bends that could advance their progress. They usually sailed at dark to take advantage of the moon's tides and night breezes.*

By the time the second son, Aert, was old enough to learn the trade, he had his older brother Otto - fourteen years his senior - as well as his aging father to guide him. Otto had followed the ship carpenter's trade, and by 1699, Aert had apparently followed in his footsteps.<sup>56</sup> Aert may have, in fact, apprenticed in the ship building yards that were springing up north of Wall St., along the Eastern shore.<sup>57</sup>

Jan Otten Van Tuyl died in the early 1690s, apparently intestate. He left behind seven children - four of them grown - and a widow in need of support. As was usual in those days, a poor widow like Geertruyd had only her family to turn to, and of course, they would have responded. By

<sup>51</sup> Parsons, G. J., "Peter Van Pelt," in *The American Genealogist*, v. 50, pp. 210-213; v. 51, pp. 42-43. Liège was in the *Spansh Netherlands* [now Belgium] which was a Catholic area. As Protestants, the Van Pelts may have emigrated for reasons of religious freedom.

<sup>52</sup> Dutch Reformed Church, "Marriage Entries of the Dutch Reformed Church at New York from June 14, 1686 to April 23, 1687," in *Collections of the Holland Society of New York*, vol. V, pg. 20.

<sup>53</sup> Selyns, pg. 13. NYGBR, vol. XI, pg. 77.

<sup>54</sup> Cramer, pg. 4; Rothschild, pg. 198.

<sup>55</sup> Tuchman, B., "The First Salute," New York, 1988, pg. 248.

<sup>56</sup> The Will of "Otto Van Toyle of the City of New Yorke Ship-Carpenter," NY Wills, Liber 23, pg. 258.

<sup>57</sup> This is inferred from his later career as a ship's carpenter, a job requiring a high degree of skill. [See Chapter 7].



## Chapter 6

1696, with Aert grown and probably firmly under the wing of his older brother Otto, Geertruyd was left with two teenage boys to keep out of trouble. Like countless poor single mothers of New York in the centuries following, Geertruyd was watching her older sons drift toward a dangerous, lawbreaking life, and she must have desperately wanted to protect her twins - Abraham and Isaac - from this influence. So when old Mr. Teunis Van Pelt of New Utrecht on Long Island (the father-in-law of Geertruyd's oldest daughter Neltje) was widowed and in need of a wife, Geertruyd probably jumped at the chance. She married him in August of 1696 and moved across the river to New Utrecht - surely with her twin boys in tow - to a wholly different life, that of a country wife with *slaves* no less! Then, this was a village which must have reminded her of Gameren: today, we call it Brooklyn.<sup>58</sup>

The twin boys with the biblical names - Abraham and Isaac - were 15 years old when they moved to New Utrecht, and for them, as for most boys, these must have been formative years. First of all, and as ironic as it may seem, these scions of Europe's breadbasket would have had to *learn* farming, since they had never lived outside a city. Secondly, their stepfather and brother-in-law, Teunis and Aert Van Pelt, would have provided role models these boys could aspire to emulate - successful, hard-working, god-fearing "Lords of the Soil." Without a doubt, not only their own lives, but those of their progeny took a fateful turn in New Utrecht.<sup>59</sup>

We don't know exactly when Geertruyd van Tuyl van Pelt died, but it was probably sometime after the turn of the 18th century.<sup>60</sup> She had experienced her share of ups and downs in life, including some we'll learn about in later chapters, but she must have died with a certain measure of contentment knowing that the biggest horror of her life - the flight to an unknown future in an alien land - was turning into a blessing for her grandchildren.

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<sup>58</sup> Parsons, pg. 210. Teunis Van Pelt must have been over 70 years old at the time of the remarriage, judging from the age of his children. He died within 3 years of the second marriage.

<sup>59</sup> At present, all known male-line American descendants of Jan and Geertruyd stem from these twin boys, Abraham and Isaac.

<sup>60</sup> In Dominie Selyn's Records, she is referred to as "Geertruyd van 's Gravenweert," which was her *mother's* maiden name. Typically, Dutch women of the time were known by their maiden names, even though they were married. Geertruyd may have preferred to be known as a van 's Gravenweert because of her mother's family's social status, as compared to that of her father's [Jan Geritsen van Lent].

*Postscript...*

## The New York Times

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1952

### OLD DUTCH MANSION LOST TO BROOKLYN

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Park Department's Razing of  
1686 Van Pelt Relic Mourned  
by Borough Antiquarians  
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By **PETER KIHSS**

Van Pelt Manor House, built by a Dutch farmer in 1686 at what is now Eighteenth Avenue and Eighty-second Street, Brooklyn, lay in ruins yesterday, its stone walls shattered and its oak floors smashed by the Park Department....

Henry Frank, acting assistant borough director of the Park Department for Brooklyn, said he had received orders to rip down the long-closed two-story structure "strictly as a safety measure." The Department took over the half-acre property as Milestone Park in 1932... A milestone--pointing to "N. York Ferry" and "Denys Ferry"--awaits disposal.

...the house was built by Aert Teunis Van Pelt, a farmer who came to New Amsterdam in 1663, and bought the Brooklyn land in 1677...