

Chapter 3

New Netherland and New Sweden Are Started

THE DUTCH SEEK TRADE IN THE EAST AND THE WEST

THE NETHERLANDS (HOLLAND), ruled by Spain in the early part of the sixteenth century, was a little nation hemmed in by neighboring countries. Like Portugal, with an open door to world waterways, she also turned to the sea for a livelihood. Dutch traders challenged the trade of Portugal in the Indian Ocean by organizing the Dutch East India Company in 1602. For almost a century before the formation of this company, bold Dutch sailors had been attacking and robbing Portuguese vessels laden with spices. These pirates, known as “beggars of the sea,” broke the power of Portugal in the Far East. They opened the ports of the East Indies to Dutch traders who followed them. During the time Spain ruled Portugal (1581-1640), these daring marauders of the sea lanes had a patriotic excuse for their piracy, since the people of the Netherlands were trying to break away from Spain.

Merchants of the Dutch East India Company were anxious to find a shorter route to the East Indies than the long voyage around the Cape of Good Hope. They hired the English navigator, Henry

Hudson, to explore the Arctic in search of a northeast passage to the Orient. Early in April, 1609, Henry Hudson sailed from Amsterdam on the *Half Moon* with “a crew of eighteen or twenty men, partly English, and partly Dutch.” A month later, he rounded the North Cape and headed for Novaya Zemlya, an island in the Arctic Ocean north of Russia. Some of his men who had been sailors in the East Indies grumbled about the bitter cold. Finding the sea blocked with ice, Hudson held a conference with his crew. He proposed that they abandon the search for a northeast passage and seek one in the northwest. Maps which a certain Captain John Smith had sent him from Virginia indicated that a strait might pass through the continent of North America.

Early in September of 1609, the *Half Moon* anchored in New York Harbor. Exploring the region, Hudson soon discovered a wide river (later named for him), which he hoped was the Northwest Passage to Cathay. He sailed up the stream as far as the present site of Albany and sent scouts to test the depth of the river beyond. On the twenty-second of September, Robert Juet recorded in the ship’s journal:

In the morning our Masters Mate and foure more of the companie went up with our Boat to sound the River higher up. At three of the clocke in the afternoone they (Indians) came aboard, and brought Tabacco, and more Beades, and gave them to our Master (Hudson), and made an Oration, and shewed him all the Countrey round about. They sent one of their companie on land, who presently returned, and brought a great Platter full of Venison, dressed by themselves. This night at ten of the clocke, our Boat returned in a showre of raine from sounding of the River; and found it to bee at an end for shipping to goe in.

The stream did not lead into the fabled Northwest Passage. Early in November of 1609, the *Half Moon* reached England where Hudson and the Englishmen in the crew were held. It was months before the East India Company in Amsterdam received the written report of the voyage, a total loss as far as that trading company was concerned. Hudson had returned with furs from North America instead of cloves from the Spice Islands.

In the following year Hudson made another voyage, this time in the *Discoverer*, in search of the Northwest Passage. The venture was financed largely by three English merchants, one of whom was Sir Thomas Smith, treasurer of The London Company that founded Jamestown in Virginia. During the winter months the *Discoverer* was ice-bound in a polar bay. The men were placed on rations of meal and biscuits, although fowl was plentiful. Mutiny began to brew on board. When the ice broke up in the late spring, the crew were afraid that Hudson would continue the search for the waterway. Under the leadership of Juet, keeper of the journal on the voyage up the Hudson River, the men rebelled. The master of the *Discoverer*, John Hudson, who probably was Henry's son, and the sick and lame were bound,

lowered into a boat, and abandoned. The ship's carpenter, refusing to join the mutineers, asked to share Hudson's fate. He begged permission to take along his kit of tools. The nine doomed men had a gun, powder and shot, an iron pot, some meal, and the carpenter's chest in the boat when cast adrift upon the icy waters of the Hudson Bay. No trace of the party was ever found. Juet did not get home. When the *Discoverer* was almost in sight of the Irish coast, Juet died of starvation and was buried at sea. The remnant of the crew that survived were thrown in prison when they finally reached England.

THE DUTCH WEST INDIA COMPANY HELPS SETTLE THE NEW WORLD

THE FURS BROUGHT BACK by Hudson in 1609 created a stir among Dutch traders. They were excited, also, by the report describing lands "as pleasant with Grasse and Flowers, and goodly Trees, as ever they had seene," and fish caught in the harbor, "ten great Mulletts of a foot and halfe long a peece." The little country of the Netherlands, proud of independence finally won from Spain, looked forward to trading with the world.

The year after Hudson's voyage, a group of Amsterdam merchants outfitted a ship and loaded a cargo of trinkets and baubles to be traded for valuable furs in the country Hudson had explored. This first venture was so successful that two vessels, the *Little Fox* and the *Little Crane*, were officially licensed the next year to look again for a northerly passage to the Orient. Their real mission was to trade with the Indians. Soon, the New Netherland Company was formed and trading posts



FORT AMSTERDAM ON MANHATTAN ISLAND

In the "New World" published by Johan De Laet in 1625, this fort and the surroundings are described as follows:

The fort was built here in the year 1614, upon an island on the west side of the river, where a nation of savages dwell called the Mohawks, the enemies of the Mohicans. On this river there is a great traffic in the skins of beavers, otters, foxes, bears, minks, wild cats and the like. The land is excellent and agreeable, full of noble forest trees and grape vines, and nothing is wanting but the labor and industry of man to render it one of the finest and most fruitful lands in that part of the world.

were erected on the island of Manhattan, claimed by the right of discovery.

After the New Netherland's charter expired, plans were made for another trading company, the Dutch West India Company. The organization of the Dutch West India Company followed the pattern used by most of the trading companies of those days. The first step was the meeting of a group of merchants who agreed to form a company, invest their own money, and sell stock to other "adventurers." Any adventurer who bought stock in the company would be entitled to a share in the profits. The money he paid for his stock would be used by the company to run its ships and carry on trade.

The next step, usually assured in

advance, was to get permission to form the company from the king or government in power. When the patent, or charter, was granted, the company had the legal right to sell stock and to seek colonists. The members of the company could make all the rules for operating the company itself and for the conduct of the colonists.

Since the charters made these trading companies into sub-nations, enjoying special privileges, each company set up its own form of government. Usually, the government was modeled upon that of the mother country. The highest governing board was composed of leading stockholders. This board was commonly called the council. The council managed the company's affairs in much the same way

that the directors of modern corporations conduct a business. This council, the home council, carried on its work from the mother country, and it appointed a governor to work in the colony. The governor ruled the colonists with the help of another council, or governing body, that operated in the trading settlement. Sometimes the governor chose the members of this advisory group from the colonists themselves. Sometimes the home council selected these men. The governor and his advisory body represented the home council in the colony. These representatives were charged with the responsibility of operating the colony for the benefit of the company.

The regulations of the French and English trading companies were much like those of the Dutch West India Company in that the company held a monopoly on trade for profit. Naturally, the settlers wanted to trade on their own account and keep the profits for themselves. The governors had difficulties enforcing the rules of their companies. In the friction that developed, the trading companies eventually lost their control of trade to the colonists.

THE PATROON SYSTEM DEVELOPS

TO GET SETTLERS, the Dutch West India Company used the land-grant plan of Spain and Portugal, but adapted it to the needs of trade. Free land was the lure held out to emigrants from crowded European countries. Any man in whom the company had confidence could become a patroon by agreeing to plant a colony of fifty persons over fifteen years of age within four years in New Netherland. Each patroon was

entitled to a grant of land extending for sixteen miles along the bank of any navigable river, or for eight miles on each side of the stream, and as far inland as he could go successfully. He also received the plants, minerals, rivers, springs, and rights to fishing, hunting and grinding on this property. The patroon system of the Dutch differed from the Spanish *encomienda* and the Portuguese captaincy in that the land grant did not include the natives living on it. The Dutch did not enslave the Indians. Since the West India Company had trading rights in Africa, Negro slaves were shipped from that continent and sold throughout the Americas. Patroons were promised that "the company will endeavor to supply the colonists with as many blacks as they possibly can." However, white laborers were preferred by the patroons. These landowners paid for the passage of white laborers across the ocean and maintained them while they worked out this expense in terms of servitude. When their contracts expired, the servants were free.

The lordly patroons had the privilege of trading in fish, slaves, and merchandise, except furs, provided they returned to Manhattan with their cargoes and paid duty of five percent to the West India Company. The company also claimed one third of the booty taken from ships at sea by vessels belonging to patroons. Dutch privateers continued to capture the Spanish treasure ships and the slavers bringing Negroes from Africa to the Spanish colonies.

Realizing that some persons might want to settle in New Netherland without the rank of patroon, the Company welcomed colonists who brought over fewer than fifty settlers. These people were allowed to hold as much land as they could cultivate properly. In an effort to create a perfect

state, the Dutch West India Company purchased land from the Indians; granted it to patroons in exchange for a share of their profits; and provided for the support of the Dutch Reformed Church, along with aid for individual colonists.

The most famous purchase was the site of present downtown New York. In the spring of 1626 Peter Minuit, first governor of the Dutch West India Company in New Netherland, opened negotiations with Indian chiefs to buy Manhattan Island. The Dutch intended to build their capital on this island. Minuit made a treaty with the natives to transfer ownership of the island to the West India Company for goods that would be worth about twenty-four dollars three centuries later.

The early settlers had no idea of the future value of land on Manhattan Island. In 1682 a lot in the old sheep-walk was recorded as follows:

Lot on Wall Street, south side, 23 feet front, 60 feet deep, sold by Mrs. Drissius to John Pound, a laborer, for about \$30.

The patroon system crumbled within and without. In an open country, rich in natural resources, both patroons and colonists wanted freedom to make the most of their opportunities. The patroons objected to the company's exclusive right to the fur trade and to paying a duty to the company. The colonists wanted to go into business for themselves instead of working for the patroons. Also, the English Government was making claim to New Netherland under charters granted to the Plymouth and London Companies, rivals of the Dutch West India Company for general business as well as fur trade. In addition, a blow was struck by Peter Minuit, whom the company

had discharged. He returned to plant a Swedish colony in their territory and to take some of the fur trade from them.

SWEDES AND FINNS SETTLE ALONG THE DELAWARE RIVER

THE FOUNDING OF NEW SWEDEN grew out of the need to sell Swedish copper to finance the Thirty Years War in Europe. The Swedish commissioner to the Netherlands was told by Blommaert, a director of the Dutch West India Company, that a market for Swedish copper might be found in North America. Shortly afterwards, Minuit, the discharged governor of New Netherland, called upon Blommaert, who was displeased with the way the Dutch West India Company was managed. The two men made a proposition to the Swedish chancellor that a Dutch Swedish company be formed to trade on the Delaware under the protection of the Swedish flag.

After a charter was obtained from the Swedish Government, it took considerable time to sell enough stock to finance the first voyage to North America. Dutch merchants waited for the Swedish merchants to pay for half the shares before they invested enough money to pay for their part. Finally, supplies were purchased, ships were secured, sailors were hired, and the expedition sailed from Sweden to the Netherlands, and across the Atlantic, with Minuit in charge.

About the middle of March, 1638, the *Kalmar Nyckel* and the *Fogel Grip* sailed into Delaware Bay with colonists from Sweden. The cargo consisted of several thousand yards of cloth, several hundred hatchets, axes, knives, tobacco pipes, and

dozens of mirrors, combs, earrings, and necklaces to trade for furs with the Indians. Minuit brought over farming tools — spades, hoes, and rakes, since the colonists would need to raise a supply of food during the summer months; and also, two barrels of wheat and two barrels of barley for seed.

Since Minuit had been governor of New Amsterdam, he had some knowledge of the region. Sailing up the Delaware River, he entered a tributary leading into the country occupied by the Minquas, a tribe of expert hunters, with whom he wanted to trade. Two miles up this branch of the Delaware, Minuit found a natural rock wharf, a good landing place, away from the beaten path of Dutch traders who claimed the “South” River trade under a charter issued to the Dutch West India Company. Guns on the *Kalmar Nyckel*, a man-o’-war, fired a Swedish salute denoting possession. It also notified the natives that white men had arrived to trade with them. The cannon brought the desired results. In a few days five Indian chiefs came on board. Minuit entertained them in his cabin and gave them presents. From them, he purchased territory along the Delaware extending sixty-seven miles along the western bank of the river, south to Duck Creek and north to the Schuylkill. When the chiefs had traced their totem marks on the treaty, all went ashore. They erected a pole with the Swedish coat of arms nailed to it, and a cannon fired a salute. The territory was christened New Sweden. On the rocky shore, Minuit built Fort Christina, named for the girl queen of Sweden. The stream, Minquas Kill, today is Christina River. It winds its lazy way through Wilmington, which was built on the site of the old fort, and is now the largest city in Delaware.

Early in the summer of 1638, the *Fogel*

Grip sailed for home. Three weeks later, Minuit left New Sweden on the *Kalmar Nyckel* to exchange a cargo of wine brought from Europe for tobacco in the West Indies. While anchored in the harbor of St. Christopher Island, the captain of *The Flying Deer*, a vessel from Rotterdam, invited Minuit and his skipper to be his guests. While aboard, a storm rose suddenly and swept the ship out to sea. It was never seen nor heard of again. After waiting three days for Minuit, his crew returned to the Netherlands. The tobacco was sent to Sweden, and the furs were turned over to Blommaert, director of the Dutch Swedish trading company. The two vessels brought back 1769 beaver skins, 314 otter, 132 bear hides, and some other skins of lesser value. Blommaert sold these pelts to pay part of the expense of the first voyage, which had been disappointing. He had hoped Minuit, with a man-o’-war, would be able to capture one or more of Spain’s silver ships and return with a big prize. Unfortunately, the leader himself did not get home.

A few years later the Dutch members of the trading company sold out to the Swedish members. Among the colonists brought over by the New Sweden Company were many Finns who had been reduced to poverty by the wars they were forced to share under the rule of Sweden. The hardy Finnish peasants cut down trees, built log houses, planted crops, and traded with the Indians. Both Swedes and Finns had begun to prosper on farms along the Delaware River when a Dutch squadron of seven vessels appeared, in 1655, and demanded the surrender of the colony. The Dutch West India Company had been complaining to the Government in the Netherlands about the Swedish settlement in territory belonging to the company.

Peter Stuyvesant, governor of New Netherland, came in person to demand the surrender. He was backed by a force of over 300 men. New Sweden was added to New Netherland under an agreement respecting private property, granting religious freedom, and permitting anyone to return to Sweden. All who remained in the Swedish colony were required to swear allegiance to the Dutch authorities in New Amsterdam. Thus ended Swedish rule on the Delaware River. However, Swedes and Finns continued to come in greater numbers to seek new homes among their countrymen who had settled in the colony. The change of ownership did not stop the migration.

Nine years later, four British frigates with soldiers on board anchored in

Gravesend Bay. The commanding officer, Sir Richard Nicolls, demanded the surrender of New Amsterdam. Lacking ammunition, soldiers, and supplies, Stuyvesant was forced to obey this order. The name was changed to New York in honor of the Duke of York, brother of the King of England. Thus ended both Dutch and Swedish rule in North America, but Dutch and Swedish colonists stayed in their homes along the Hudson and the Delaware. New York joined the British colonies in 1664.

MAPS:

WA9r, WA12r

Atlas of American History by Edgar B. Wesley