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THE

SETTLEMENT

AND

EARLY HISTORY OF ALBANY;

A PRIZE ESSAY,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATION,

DECEMBER 26, 1850.



BY WILLIAM BARNES, ESQ.

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## HISTORY OF ALBANY.

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No city in the United States is more fruitful of historic interest than Albany. Not so, by some one great event, which will stand forever as a beacon light in the path of Time, illumining as with a petrified brightness the place of its occurrence; but, by the numberless events, and early and interesting associations, clustering in every half century of its existence.

It is not a spirit at war with the genius of republican institutions, which inclines us to muse on the history of our own city, and recount with pride and admiration the incidents of its early annals, and the scenes of its younger days; nor, to my notion, is it reprehensible to look back with the same feeling to the noble deeds and exalted worth of our ancestors, if we draw from the retrospect, not a false estimate of superiority in ourselves, but only deeper and more powerful incentives to become worthy of such ancestry. The connection of the past with the present, of the present with the future, form some of the noblest motives to human exertion, and some of the most powerful restraints to the commission of crime; and a due consideration of their relation to each other, constitutes the distinguishing characteristic of the wise and great. An intimate or even general knowledge of the early history of our own city, disseminated more widely among its inhabitants, would be a source of pure and exalted enjoyment, and might arouse in some stoical heart that Albanian pride, so justly the property of our citizens, but which we have only slightly cultivated.

American History, unlike European and Asiatic, contains the records of only two hundred and fifty years. It bears not upon

its pages the mystic annals of China and of Egypt, of Greece and of Rome. We can date our origin—the settlement of every city, village and hamlet; and oftentimes the memory of the “oldest inhabitant” of some great and crowded emporium contains the complete record of its foundation, growth and maturity. We can claim for Albany an older date than that of our great commercial metropolis, and that, next to Jamestown in Virginia, it is the oldest city in the United States.

After the discovery of America by Columbus, European enterprise was directed to this continent, as the California of those days; and the mystery and uncertainty of its true wealth, extent and fertility, added greatly to the excitement consequent on its discovery.

In the early part of the seventeenth century, the Dutch established trading houses near the present cities of New-York and Albany. In September, 1609, the immortal Hendrick Hudson, in the ship “Half Moon,” made his memorable voyage up our noble river which bears his name : a part of the crew of this vessel were the first white men that ever saw the site of our present goodly city. Its hills were then covered with the pine, the maple, the oak and the elm; while through the valleys flowed the Rutenkill and Foxenkill, and on the outskirts ran the noisy waters of the Beaverkill and Patroon’s creek. The wild vine clambered in rich luxuriance on the forest trees, and threw its graceful festoons from the mossy banks of the river. The slender deer bounded undisturbed through the tangled thickets, or bent his antlered head to drink from the limpid streams that crossed his path. The beaver sported unmolested in the bright waters, which are now doomed to the darkness and gloom of a subterranean passage to the river; and slept in conscious security on the low grounds of the southern and eastern portions of the city, where now the elegant stores and stately residences of our citizens have obliterated all traces of his patient industry. Where now the hum of busy thousands attests the mart of commerce, industry and enterprise — silence reigned supreme. Could the immortal Hendrick have slept the fabled sleep which the genius of Irving

has interwoven with the banks of the Hudson, and beheld, on his awaking at the present day, our venerated city as it now stands, his bewildered memory could have scarcely recalled the fact of its primitive solitude.

I have many times thought that the greatest blessing Deity could vouchsafe to mortals, would be the privilege of revisiting, in after centuries, the scenes of *our* lifetime labors and discoveries; but ever as I ponder on that ecstatic bliss, the thought recurs, that were it permitted us, Americans, to behold the sites of our dwellings, farms, villages and cities, before the white man's foot had touched these shores, that such a scene would be equally enchanting. It would be interesting to know what chief raised his rude wigwam on "the Hill" where stands the Capitol, second only in importance to that which rears its head at Washington. We would know his life, his oratory, his adventures, his battles, and his death; whether also on that Hill, at any time, Indian sachems conferred in council, or Indian warriors sounded their terrific war-whoop, and fought and died in battle. We would also know of the gentler partner of his wild-wood home; of the mingled romance and reality of her life and her religion, and her patient endurance of hardships and fatigues, which would blanch the cheek and chill the blood of our modern fair. We would know if their soothsayers ever predicted anything of the utter destruction that has fallen upon their race, and the power, and strength, and skill of the white men who have supplanted them. We would know how those Romans of the New World, the fearless Iroquois, held the whole northern country in subjection to their despotic sway; whether it was bravery, or wisdom, or oratory, or all of these combined, which gave them their acknowledged supremacy and terrible power. The unwritten pages of Indian history would form volumes of thrilling interest to the world; but there are no landmarks in the darkness of their Past, and the simple aborigines lived and died, but gave no sign, save now and then, when an earnest antiquarian enters upon the broad field of conjecture, and strives to rescue from oblivion the rude hieroglyphics that lie buried in the red man's grave.

We leave this speculative ground, for the real and authentic history of Albany.

Hendrick Hudson had been despatched from Holland in the vessel "Half Moon," by the Dutch East India Company, to search for a northwest passage to India and China, which at this time was attracting the attention of the scientific men of Europe. In coasting along the American shore, he entered the bay of the Manhattes, or New-York; and, attracted by the beauty of the banks of the *Cohotatea*, as the river was called by the natives, and in the hope of finding the long sought for passage, he ascended to the head of navigation for vessels of the tonnage of the Half Moon, near the present city of Hudson, and despatched Robert Juet, the mate and four sailors, up the stream as far as Albany. Not finding any passage to *China*, probably for the reason that he did not go up as far as our neighboring city, and seek a route "*via Troy*," he returned to Europe.

The Half Moon, after some detention in England, sailed for Holland, with the interesting tidings of Hudson's discoveries. He, however, was prevented from leaving, by the English authorities, who began to grow jealous of the maritime enterprises of the Dutch. Of his history little is known. He was an Englishman by birth. Soon after this voyage, he made another in the service of the London Company, to the northern part of this continent, where success again rewarded him by the discovery of the large Bay which is also called by his name. On his return voyage, a mutiny broke out among the ship's crew; and he, with several of his sailors, was placed in a small boat and set adrift upon the waste of waters. It is probable that he died of starvation; or, perhaps, to avert the terrors of such an agonizing death, voluntarily sought his grave, and sleeps beneath the waters of that ocean which once bore him proudly on to the scene of his future fame and immortality.

The announcement of Hudson's discoveries aroused the enterprise of the merchants of the United Provinces of the Netherlands; and several ships were despatched to the Island of Manhattan, to trade with the Indians. An ordinance or Octroy was

passed on the twenty-seventh day of March 1614, by the States General, giving to the first discoverers "of any new courses, havens, countries or places," being inhabitants of the United Netherlands, the exclusive right and privilege of making the first four voyages to such places so discovered. The Netherlands were at this time the first maritime power of Europe, and Amsterdam was the commercial capital of the world; her citizens had amassed their wealth upon the seas, and her merchant princes claimed an equality with the aristocracy and nobility of Europe. The independence of the Provinces had been virtually wrenched from the haughty Philip of Spain; and Prince Maurice — the Washington of the Dutch — was acknowledged one of the greatest generals of the age. During the war against the combined forces of England and France, London itself, while ridiculing the Dutch admirals, trembled for its very existence. With their government was also mixed the leaven of Republicanism — always a source of activity and enterprise, and adding incalculably to the effective power of a nation. The Republic had been ushered into existence by its hatred of Spanish oppression and the Spanish Inquisition. It felt all the energies of a youthful nation that had bought its religious and political independence by its own inherent bravery and valor.

We may perhaps be amused at the ridicule some writers have seen fit to bestow upon the eccentricities of our Dutch ancestry; but the genius of such persons might have been more worthily employed in caricaturing vice and immorality, and ministering to our lower faculties only to effect some exalted and elevated purpose. Surely no one in whose veins runs the blood of the Puritans, can forget the land and the race that afforded them shelter and protection from British intolerance and persecution. We would do well to remember that in Politics, Jurisprudence, Medicine, Theology, the Arts, and in land and naval warfare, Holland can boast of such names as DE WITT, BARNEVELDT, GROTIUS, BOERHAAVE, ERASMUS, REMBRANDT, RUBENS, VAN DYKE, PRINCE MAURICE, DE RUYTER, and VAN TROMP; a constellation of genius unequalled at this period in any other nation of the world.

Immediately after the passage of the Octroy of March 1614, several Amsterdam and Hoorn merchants despatched five ships on voyages of exploration and discovery; three of which were commanded by the eminent navigators Adriaen Block, Hendrick Corstiaensen and Cornelius Jacobsen Mey. They explored the American coast from Massachusetts Bay to Virginia, and gave names to the bays, islands, rivers, &c.; and Skipper Hendricksen, upon whom the command of one of the ships devolved, on his return to Holland in 1616, presented to the States General a figurative map of his discoveries, which is the oldest chart of these countries known to exist. The original was found by Mr. Brodhead at the Hague in 1841, and a copy is published in O'Callaghan's History of New Netherland.

On the eleventh day of October 1614, the States General granted to Gerrit Jacob Witsen and others, the enterprising merchants of Amsterdam and Hoorn above mentioned, a Charter, under the Octroy of March, conferring on them the exclusive privilege of trading to New Netherland, or the countries between New France and Virginia, for four voyages to be made within three years commencing on or before the first day of January 1615. The company now assumed the name of the United New Netherland Company; and in 1614, Hendrick Corstiaensen erected under the above grant a trading house on "the Island" below the site of our city, and nearly opposite the princely residence of our respected townsman, E. P. Prentice, Esq., at Mount Hope. The trading house was 26 feet wide and 36 feet long, surrounded by a stockade 50 feet square and a moat 18 feet wide: two pieces of cannon and eleven stone guns were mounted for its defence, and it was garrisoned by ten or twelve men under the command of Corstiaensen and Jacob Jacobz Elkins. Here an extensive fur trade was opened and carried on with the Indians.

The river was then generally called the Mauritius, or Prince Maurice's River, and was named after Maurice of Nassau, Prince of Orange, who, at the age of eighteen, on the murder of his father, succeeded to the government of the low countries, and became Captain General of the United States. He strengthened

and confirmed the newly established Republic, by his wisdom and bravery, and enlarged its provinces and its fame by numerous conquests and splendid victories. The river was also called the Great North River of the New Netherlands by the Dutch settlers, in contradistinction from the South or Delaware River. This name, to some extent, it still retains. Hudson called it the *Great River of the Mountains*. In the journal of a French Jesuit (Father Jogues), written in 1646, it is called the *Oiouge*; but the natives at its mouth knew it as the *Mohegan*, but generally by the name of *Manhattes*, though among the Mohicans it received the title of *Shatemuck*. The Mohawks, however, graced it with the more euphonious and poetical name of *Cohotatea*.

The fort on Castle Island is designated on the map of Skipper Hendricksen as *Fort Nassau*, but was also known by the name of the *Kas-teel* or *Castle*. It was never generally recognized as *Fort Nassau*; another fort, bearing that name, having been erected shortly after on the South or Delaware river.

In the spring of 1617, by the breaking up of the ice on the river, there was a heavy freshet; but at that time, *the Dock* and *the Pier* were not in a condition to receive much injury, though the small fort and trading house on the Island were nearly destroyed. The company therefore erected a new fort on the hill, called by the Indians *Tawasgunshee*, near the banks of the Normanskill, or *Tawalsantha creek*. The *Normanskill* was named after Albert Adriensen Bradt "de-noorman," or Northman, one of the early settlers at Rensselaerwyck. The *Ruttenkill* was named from Rutgers Bleecker, a proprietor of land adjoining it. He was probably the ancestor of the worthy Dutch family of that name, whose history is identified with that of Albany from its earliest existence. The five streams, from the Normanskill to Patroon's creek, were, however, at this period designated as the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th kills.

The exclusive privileges of the New Netherland Company having expired according to the terms of the grant in January 1618, the country was open to individual enterprise; but the original company, by their old and well-founded establishments

and knowledge of the trade, still retained control of the greater portion of the traffic until 1621. The same year, the Dutch made a solemn alliance and treaty of peace with the Five Nations, near the mouth of the Normanskill, and it was confirmed with great formality and ceremony. To the honor of the parties, be it said, it was never broken, so long as the Dutch retained their power in this state.

On the third day of June 1621, the States General organized the West India Company, and granted it a Charter similar to the one granted to the East India Company; partly for commercial and in part for warlike purposes, as the twelve years truce with Spain had expired. To this company was given the exclusive privilege of trading and navigating to the coasts of Africa, North and South America and the West Indies, for a period of twenty-four years (which was subsequently extended); and they were empowered to found colonies, erect fortifications, make treaties, and possessed Legislative, Executive and Judicial powers over their colonies. The control of the Company was vested in five chambers of managers, styled "Lords Directors," at Amsterdam, Zealand, Maeze, North Holland and Friesland; and the general meeting of the chambers was composed of XIX delegates or directors, in whom was lodged the supreme power of the company, having authority even to declare war, subject to the approbation of their High Mightinesses the States General. The Government also gave them nearly half a million of dollars, and subscribed another half million to the stock of the company; and in case of war, were to assist them with a large naval force. The management of New Netherland was committed to the Amsterdam Chamber, which was the richest and most influential, appointing nine delegates to the Assembly of XIX.

In 1623, the West India Company erected a Fort on the site of the old Fort Orange (now Phœnix) Hotel, in front of the present steamboat landing, and called it Fort Orange, in honor of Maurice, Prince of Orange. In March of this year, the company sent out a vessel of 260 tons, under the command of Captain Mey, with thirty families, principally *Walloons*. The *Walloons* were of French descent, and resided on the frontiers of Belgium and



France : they professed the reformed religion, and were distinguished for their bravery and valor. Some of their number settled at Fort Orange, for the purpose of colonizing the country and commencing farming operations. The Fort was then commanded by Daniel Van Krieckebeeck, or Beeck. Little was done, however, towards the cultivation of the soil, the settlers engaging principally in traffic with the Indians. In 1626, there were but eight families resident here.

It was during this year that the Maikans made war on the Maquaes, and asked the assistance of Commander Beeck, and six of his men. He accordingly went, with the required number, and met the enemy about a mile from the Fort. Commander Beeck, with three of his men, were slain, one of whom was roasted and eaten by the Indians; whereupon all the families were ordered to leave Fort Orange, and sixteen men remained as a garrison. Soon after this occurrence, Pieter Barentsen, an Indian trader, arrived at the fort; and Director Minuit, who was the first director of the Company at Manhattan, ordered him to remain as commander. Two years after, the war between the Maikans and the Maquaes was renewed; the former were vanquished, and the remnant of their tribe, not captured, removed to the Connecticut or Fresh River.

Barentsen, having returned to Holland, the command of the fort devolved upon Sebastian Jansen Krol. At this time, there were about twenty-five traders here.

On the ninth day of September 1629, Admiral Pieter Pietersen Heyn achieved his brilliant victory in favor of the West India Company, against the Spanish "Plate," or, as it is more commonly known, "Silver Fleet," of twenty sail; capturing the whole number, including a large quantity of gold and silver, and other spoil to the amount of 5,000,000 dollars. The impetus given to the affairs of the company by this unprecedented success, swelled their dividends to 50 per cent, and hastened the adoption of a system to colonize New Netherland on a more extensive scale than had hitherto been attempted. On the seventeenth day of June 1629, the Assembly of the XIX, attended by commissioners

of the States General, passed the "*Charter of Privileges and Exemptions*." This document has ever since had an important bearing on the history of New-York, and is the primary and fruitful source of all the "*anti-rent*" disturbances that have recently agitated this State. It was strangely enough called a "*Charter of Privileges*," when, by it, the system of Patroonship and *Feudalism* was transplanted to our American shores.

The Feudal System, either in its original form of military tenure, or with various modifications, prevailed at this period all over Europe. Never was a system devised, so well calculated for the prosperity of the nobility and aristocracy, and the oppression, dependency and degradation of all other classes. By its adoption in New Netherland, the Dutch probably lost the territory, which, under a different system, they might have retained. Had the "*boors*" of the patroons been *free men*, it would have encouraged a more numerous emigration, and they would have felt a stronger interest in the government of their Fatherland, and never surrendered without resistance to the jurisdiction of a foreign power.

By this Charter, all persons, being members of the West India Company, who planted a colonie of fifty souls above the age of fifteen years, were to be acknowledged Patroons of New Netherland. They were allowed to extend their boundaries sixteen miles on the shore of a navigable river, or eight miles on both sides; but the extent into the interior was unlimited. The consent of the Patroon, in writing, was necessary, in order that a colonist might leave a colonie; and after his term of service was fulfilled, he was compelled to return to Holland. The Patroons were to have a monopoly of fishing, hunting, and grinding, of all mines and minerals, and a pre-emption right of buying the colonists' surplus grain and cattle. The Patroons possessed the absolute title to the soil; and their courts had jurisdiction of actions, subject to appeal, in cases of upwards of fifty guilders, to the Company's commander and council in New Netherland. The Patroons' courts had also jurisdiction in criminal cases, even to punishment by death; and in the colonie of Rensselaerwyck, an

agreement was required by the Patroon of every settler, not to appeal from the sentence of his courts. Private persons, however, were allowed to settle and possess the lands they could properly improve, subject to the approbation of the director and council.

On the eighteenth day of April 1630, Bastiaen Jansen Krol and Dirk Cornelissen Duyster, commissary and under-commissary at Fort Orange, purchased of the Indians a large tract of land lying below the Fort, and between Beeren and Smackx islands, for Killian Van Rensselaer, a pearl merchant of Amsterdam, and one of the home directors of the Company. In July of the same year, and also in April 1637, other purchases were made by him; so that the whole of his princely domain was forty-eight miles broad, and extended twenty-four miles on both sides of the river, reaching from Beeren island to Cahoos. In October 1630, Van Rensselaer associated with himself Samuel Godyn, Johannes de Laet, Toussaint Moussart, Samuel Bloemmart, and Adam Bissels. Van Rensselaer was to remain sole Patroon, and the recipient of feudal rights and honors; but the association was divided into five shares, of which he held two, De Laet one, Godyn one, and the fifth share was divided among the remaining three. All the shares were, however, finally purchased, or extinguished by Van Rensselaer in 1685.

Jacob Albertsen Planck was the first *schout-fiscaal* of Rensselaerwyck. This office was the most influential one in the colonie; comprising in its character that of sheriff, district attorney and attorney general, beside other duties peculiar to the system of patroonship. Arendt Van Curlear was appointed secretary, and superintendent of the colonie. He obtained such an influence over the Indians by his kindness, benevolence and integrity, that they ever after addressed the governors of New-York by the name of "*Corlear*;" a tribute to his memory, from the untutored savages, more glorious than monumental marble, or the praises of song.

About the first of June 1630, a number of colonists, with their stock, farming implements, &c., arrived at Rensselaerwyck.

Other settlers followed; so that the conditions of the Charter of 1629, as to the number of colonists, were fulfilled within the required period. The expenses of the first settlers were principally borne by the proprietors of the colonie.

The Patroon claimed a monopoly of the fur trade; allowing the colonists, however, to engage in the traffic, by dividing the profits.

In 1633, an English ship, "The William," visited Fort Orange to trade with the Indians, and landed its cargo about a mile below the Fort. Director Van Twiller sent up three vessels from Fort Amsterdam; and, with the assistance of the soldiers from the fort, they succeeded in taking it, and after convoying it down the Hudson, they ordered the Englishmen to leave the country.

Eight small houses, and a large one "with balustrades," were erected this year at Fort Orange. A brewery was also built about this time.

In 1634, the village began to assume a name independent of the Fort, and was called *Beaverswyck*, or *Beaver's fuyck*, or the *Fuyck*, so named from the crescent form of the bay at this place.\* The inhabitants seem not to have turned their attention, in any great degree, toward agricultural pursuits: a few patches of maize or Indian corn, only, were cultivated about the Fort. Four years after, there were only some half dozen farms or "*boueries*" under tillage; the inhabitants generally being traders with the Indians, or officers and soldiers at the Fort.

During the year 1638, Bastien Jansen Krol was commissary, and Adrien Dirksen assistant; Dirk Stipel being the "*wachtmeister*," or commander of the Fort. The claim of the Patroon to the fur trade with the natives, led to a long controversy with the Director of the Company at Manhattan; but during this year it was settled, and a new impulse was given to the settlement of the country by a proclamation from the Amsterdam Chamber, opening the trade to all the inhabitants of the States, their allies

\* Mrs. Grant, in her *Memoirs of an American Lady*, says that Albany was called by the Dutch, at a subsequent period, "*Oriensburgh*." Among the French of Canada, it was also known by the name of "*Orange*." Washington Irving, in his *History of New-York*, calls it "*Fort Aurania*."

and friends; and the Director and Court at Fort Amsterdam were instructed to convey to every person all the lands he could properly cultivate, subject to a payment to the company, after four years, of a tenth of the produce of the same.

The controversies which had arisen between the Patroons and directors of the West India Company, as well as the amount of land acquired under the system of patroonship, caused the directors to repurchase all the colonies that could be bought, and led to an alteration of the "Charter of Privileges and Exemptions."

In the year 1640, the Charter was essentially modified: the right to become Patroons was not limited to members of the Company, but was extended to all citizens of New Netherland. The extent of future colonies was limited to three miles along the bank of a river, and six miles into the interior; and no colonie was allowed to be located on a river opposite a colonie. The Patroons were obliged to send over the fifty colonists in three years, instead of four; one-third annually. Any person who should send over five colonists above fifteen years of age, was constituted a "master," and allowed the privilege of hunting and fishing in the public streams. The privileges as to trade and commerce, granted to the Patroons by the charter of 1629, were extended to all free colonists and inhabitants of New Netherland, subject to an import tax of 5 and an export duty of 10 per cent, and the prohibition of manufactures in the colonies was also abolished. This Charter was again somewhat modified in 1650.

In the same year (1640), the Patroon appointed Adrien van der Donck, a graduate from the University of Leyden, *schout-fiscaal* for Rensselaerwyck. He remained eight years in this country; and, on his return to Holland, published a description of the New Netherlands, a copy of which can be found in the collections of the New-York Historical Society.

Two years after the appointment of Van der Donck, the Patroon sent to the colony of Rensselaerwyck the Rev. Johannes Megapolensis, "the pious and well learned minister of the congregation of Schoorel and Berge." He was the first clergyman ever located here. The next year a church was erected for his

accommodation, back of the fort, near what is still called "Church street." It was 19 feet wide and 34 feet long, rudely constructed, and contained nine benches for the congregation. This building was occupied until 1656, when a new one was erected in the centre of the street, at the intersection of what is now Broadway and State streets. This place of worship, after being rebuilt in 1715, was used until 1805, when it was torn down, and the land purchased by the city. The stone step formerly at the vestibule of the church, has, by mistake, been recently removed from its old location; but ere long, we trust it will be returned, and that the liberality of our city will protect this sacred relic of its earlier days by an appropriate railing and inscription, that it may not be daily profaned by the track of the passing vehicle, and the tread of the busy multitude.

In 1642, a ferry was established between Beaverswyck and "Tuscameatic," as Greenbush was then called by the Indians. Its present appellation is derived from the Dutch, "Het Green Bosch," or "The Pine Woods." This ferry has now been in operation, in the same place, for 208 years, and is therefore the oldest ferry in the United States.

The year following, Van Rensselaer erected a Fort and trading house on Beeren island, which is south of Coeymans landing. It was built for the purpose of protecting the colonie, and to exclude from the river private traders, who had encroached on the fur trade to a ruinous extent. It was called by the high sounding name of "*Rensselaerstein*," or Rensselaer's Castle; and Nicholas Coorn was appointed "wacht-meister." The raising of this Fort, and the exaction of staple-right or toll on all vessels excepting those belonging to the West India Company, and the lordly pretensions of Killian Van Rensselaer, caused a sharp and bitter controversy between the Directors at Fort Amsterdam, and the Patroon.

The winter of 1647 was one of the coldest ever known. The river was frozen as early as the twenty-fifth of November, and remained thus four months: in the spring, a destructive freshet succeeded, which materially injured the Fort, and otherwise da-

maged Beaverswyck. It was during this spring that two whales, inspired probably with the spirit of discovery, came up the river as far as this place, filling the inhabitants with extreme terror. One of these sea-monsters penetrated as far as the Mohawk river, where it stranded on an island, and was soon despatched by the inhabitants, who roasted it, and obtained large quantities of oil. The river presented a singular appearance for nearly a fortnight, in consequence of the oil which floated down the stream.\*

Killian Van Rensselaer died in 1646, and Johannes Van Rensselaer succeeded him as Patroon of Rensselaerwyck. At the time of his father's death he was a minor, and his uncle Johannes Van Wely and Wouter Van Twiller were made executors and guardians of his estate. Brandt Arent von Slechtenhorst was appointed Director of the colonie. In 1648, Peter Stuyvesant was Director of New Netherlands; and in accordance with home instructions, he undertook to circumscribe the limits and weaken the power of the Patroon of Rensselaerwyck. Stuyvesant insisted that Rensselaerwyck was within the jurisdiction of New Amsterdam. Slechtenhorst denied this, and insisted on all the claims of feudalism, over the patroonship granted by the charter of 1629, and by the civil or Roman law, and also by the usages and customs of the Fatherland. Both were high-tempered, irritable, and headstrong men. Stuyvesant sent several proclamations to Fort Orange, which were met by the Patroon's Director with counter proclamations. Stuyvesant claimed a tax and excise duty from the colonists at Rensselaerwyck; and also that the inhabitants of Beaverswyck were privileged to trade in furs, and cut timber and firewood on the unoccupied lands of the colonie. He asserted that the Patroon could hold only eight miles on both sides of the river, and that he was compelled to locate this part, and surrender the residue of his twenty-four miles. He complained also that the Patroon had violated the Charter of 1629, by exacting from the colonists an agreement not to appeal from

\* This may be considered a rather large "fish story" for the veracity of "Sturgeondom;" but the facts are well attested by Van der Donck, and other reliable records of that period.

the decisions of his courts. The boundaries were indefinite between Fort Orange and the colonie, and Stuyvesant forbid all building by the Patroon within cannon shot of the Fort. All the houses erected at this time nestled closely under the guns of the Fort, for protection from the Indians, who had made war on the settlements and colonies at New Amsterdam, destroyed many villages, and materially injured the prosperity of the country.

Stuyvesant visited Fort Orange with a military escort, to settle the difficulties; but all negotiations between the contending parties were of no avail. He returned to New Amsterdam, and sent up six soldiers to demolish the trading house of the Patroon near the Fort. This order, however, was not carried into effect.

In 1649, Von Slechtenhorst purchased for the Patroon a large tract of land near Kaatskill, and leased it to his tenants. This caused another protest from Stuyvesant. In Holland, Van Twiller was claiming for the Patroon the exclusive right of navigating the Hudson, and even the land on which Fort Orange stood; asserting that the colonie of Rensselaerwyck extended from Beeren island to the Cahoos, and included Beaverswyck as well as Fort Orange.

While matters were in this state, the Amsterdam Chamber sent over an order to the Director to demolish, by force of arms, if necessary, the Patroon's Fort on Beeren island. Difficulties still multiplied. Stuyvesant demanded the excise on beer manufactured at Rensselaerwyck, and levied a subsidy on the colonie. Both of these demands were resisted by Slechtenhorst, and he visited New Amsterdam to protest against such proceedings, when he was imprisoned for four months by the Director, but, at the end of this time, managed to make his escape to Fort Orange. The Patroon's house at this place was assaulted soon after by the soldiers, and personal violence offered to Slechtenhorst's son.

In February 1652, Stuyvesant sent up proclamations, defining the limits of Fort Orange and Beaverswyck; and directed Johannes Dyckman, the Company's commissary, to publish the same. He took the placards, and came to the court, where the magistrates of the colonie were in session, and attempted to stop



the proceedings, for the purpose of proclaiming them; when Von Slechtenhorst snatched them from his hands, and tore off the seals. Another placard was sent up soon after, and the bounds of Beaverswyck were staked out; but the constable of the colonie tore them down, and a remonstrance was prepared and sent to New Amsterdam.

A few months after this, Stuyvesant again visited Rensselaerwyck, and, on his arrival, sent a party of soldiers to the Patroon's house, with orders to Von Slechtenhorst to strike the Patroon's flag; which he indignantly refused to do. The soldiers thereupon entered the house, and, lowering the proud colors of the feudal lord, they conveyed Von Slechtenhorst a civil prisoner to New Amsterdam. Thus was the land on which our city stands, rescued from the feudal tenure of patroonship, by the quarrels of the Amsterdam Chamber of the West India Company with the Patroon.

On the tenth of April 1652, Stuyvesant issued a proclamation, constituting a court at Beaverswyck, independent of Rensselaerwyck. This was the first court established at Albany.

The whole controversy was finally brought before the States General for adjudication; and in 1673, after New Netherland had been taken by the English, and retaken for a short period by the Dutch, Beaverswyck, or Willemstadt as it was then called, was ordered to be restored to the Patroon. The same order was made by the Duke of York's law council in England, and Sir Edmund Andross was instructed to deliver up the village to the Patroon; and the Patroon was authorised to levy a tax of two beavers on each dwelling house for thirty years, and afterwards to such an amount as the inhabitants should agree for with the Patroon. Andross, however, never fulfilled this order. Governor Dongan also refused to fulfil this decision; judging "it not for his Ma'ty's interest that the second town of the government, which brings his Ma'ty soe great a revenue, should be in the hands of any particular man:" but in 1686, when the city of Albany was incorporated, he obtained a release from the Patroon of his pretended rights.

The first of the Patroon's family that ever visited this country, was Jean Baptiste Van Rensselaer, who succeeded Von Slechtenhorst as Director of Rensselaerwyck. In June 1655, Commissary Dyckman having become insane, the office of vice-director at Beaverswyck was given to Johannes de Decker. In the fall of the year, Father le Moyne, a French Jesuit, visited Fort Orange; and soon after, a party of 100 Mohawk warriors stopped here, on their way to Canada to fight with the French, and solicited the Dutch to remain neutral in the contest. This the magistrates agreed to do. Johannes la Montaigne succeeded de Decker as vice-director of Beaverswyck.

The court house at this time was within the Fort, and in the second story of a house built of boards, with the roof shaped like a "pavillion." No massive marble steps, worn and indented by the tread of busy feet, made the ascent to the temple of the "blind Goddess" easy and delightful, to the few citizens who sought for a redress of grievances at her hands. A rude ladder was the only means of access afforded to her votaries. But within, I doubt not, the Dutch "schepens," held the scales of Justice with all the dignity, impartiality and firmness of a modern Kent, Story or Marshall. No new Code of practice and pleadings embarrassed the client practitioner of those days. The legal profession was not yet established here; Vander Donck, the first lawyer, having been prohibited from practising, except to "give advice," on the ground that there was no other lawyer in the colonie to oppose him, as an advocate in the trial of causes.

In 1656, a part of New Netherland was purchased of the Amsterdam chamber, by the city of Amsterdam, for 700,000 guilders; but this purchase did not affect any part of Beaverswyck. In 1659, delegates were sent from Fort Orange and Rensselaerwyck to cement the peace with the Five Nations. Jeremias Van Rensselaer, and Arendt Van Curlear, with others, were delegated for that purpose. The pipe of peace that was once smoked, on the banks of the Normanskill, was re-lighted in the first castle of the Mohawks, at *Kaghnavage*, and the chain of friendship, unbroken for sixteen years, was brightened anew by fresh pledges of amity, alliance and good will.

Beaverswyck was the principal centre of the fur trade in North America, and this traffic was the chief occupation of the inhabitants; almost every person being a trader. In 1660 the practice of sending "runners" into the country to intercept the Indians, before arriving at the Fort, or colonie, prevailed to such a ruinous extent, that Director Stuyvesant visited the village to correct the evil. Trade was injured, the Indians cheated and sometimes robbed, and they had made it a matter of complaint to the authorities. Parties ran high on this question in Beaverswyck, and they were styled "*Runners*" and "*Anti-Runners.*" These parties seem to have survived to Albany ever since that time, and maintained a like contest in various departments of business, not always in favor of our good reputation abroad. The chiefs of the Senecas met Stuyvesant at Fort Orange; the inhabitants of the colonie and Beaverswyck attended, the difficulties were discussed, and the negotiation conducted with all the usual formalities of Indian diplomacy. The "Runner," or as it was termed in olden time, "Broker" system was agreed to be discontinued; but the repeated re-enactments against it, appearing for many years afterward in the records of the Common Council, prove that it was never entirely destroyed. In 1663, a war broke out with the Esopus Indians, which was carried on by Director Stuyvesant for several campaigns, very successfully, and the Esopus tribe were nearly exterminated.

The boundaries between New Netherland and New England, had been, from their earliest settlement, a subject of exciting controversy between the colonists here, and the mother countries at home. Negotiations and petty contests had succeeded each other, for almost the whole period of their existence. In 1614, Capt. Argal, from Virginia, had attacked the trading house at Manhattan, and reduced it to temporary subjection. From 1652 to 1654, the Dutch and English were engaged in open war at home, and Van Tromp had achieved many naval victories. On the 12th day of May, 1664, Charles II. granted to his "dearest brother James, Duke of York and Albany," a Charter for the New Netherland. The original Charter now hangs in the State Library in this city. An English force was sent over by the

Duke, in order to acquire possession of the territory granted to him. On the 6th day of September, 1664, New Amsterdam and the Fort were surrendered to the English, under Nichols, by Stuyvesant, without a struggle, but much against his own inclination. On the 10th, George Carteret was sent by Governor Nichols, to take Fort Orange, which also surrendered without resistance, on the 24th day of September. By the terms of capitulation, the Dutch were to retain all their property and rights of citizenship, and become subjects of the Duke of York. The Duke, by his Charter, was to have full and absolute power and authority, to control, correct, pardon and punish, govern and rule his subjects, according to such laws, ordinances and directions, as he should establish. The Proprietary government of the Duke of York, continued from 1664 to 1685, when the Duke became King, and assumed the title of James II., though he still retained, even in his royalty, the title of "Supreme Lord and Proprietor of the Province of New York and its dependencies." A Code of laws was framed called the "Duke's Laws," which prevailed until 1691, under which the country was ruled by his agents, and colonial governors. We New Yorkers, have oftentimes been amused by the extravagant austerity of the Connecticut "*Blue Laws*," a few extracts from the "*Duke's Laws*," under which our state was governed for nearly thirty years, will show that their severity was not without a parallel.

"Stocks and Pillories" were to be erected in every town.

It was ordained that the ministers should "pray for the King, Queen, Duke of York and the Royal Family." Another law was as follows:—

"If any persons within this Government shall, by direct, express, impious, or presumptuous ways, deny the true God and his attributes, *he shall be put to death.*"

Another—"If any child, or children, above sixteen years of age, and of sufficient understanding, shall smite their natural Father or Mother, unless thereunto provoked and forced for their self preservation or mayming, at the complaint of the said Father or Mother, they being sufficient witnesses thereof, that child or those children, so offending, *shall be put to death.*"

The English, in conquering the country, seemed determined also to conquer its Dutch associations. To Fort Orange was given the name of Albany, from the Duke's Scotch title, and New Amsterdam was called New York. By way of continuing claim from its first discovery by an Englishman, the Mauritius river, now assumed the name of Hudson river. The Patroon of Rensslaerwyck, retained his colonie, with the exception of the government and holding courts; it was transformed into a "manor" in accordance with English laws and customs. Our city continued to receive accessions of settlers, chiefly English, and a few from the other American colonies.

In 1686 it had attained importance enough, in the eyes of the British government, to be incorporated as a city; and Peter Schuyler and Robert Livingston were commissioned by the inhabitants to go to New York, and procure the Charter, which was published on their return, "with all y<sup>e</sup> joy and acclamation imaginable." The bounds of the city by this Charter were stated to be, on the east, by the Hudson river; on the south, by a line running northwest sixteen miles from the north end of Martin Geritsen's island, to the Sand-kill; on the north, by a line to be drawn from the post set by Governor Stuyvesant near the river, running northwest sixteen miles; and on the west, by a straight line drawn from the points of the said north and south lines. Numerous privileges and immunities were allowed to Albany, as an "*ancient city*;" and all land not hitherto granted within the chartered limits was given to the corporation, as well as the privilege of purchasing from the natives 500 acres at *Schaaghtecouge*, and 1000 acres at "*Tionondoroge*." They were also allowed to enact laws, and ordinances for the government and regulation of the Indian trade. The city held their Indian lands for a long period, and derived considerable revenue from their tenants: the rent was payable principally in wheat; the minutes of the Common Council detail the manner in which it was sold at auction by the city. The Common Council, however, had repeated controversies with the Five Nations about these lands.

The Stadt House or State House referred to in the Charter,

stood on the corner of what is now Hudson street and Broadway, on the site of the present Commercial Buildings. Here also were the prison, the whippingpost, the stocks and the pillory. The courts were held at this place, and continued to be until a late period. Within the memory of some of our citizens, the eloquence of Emmet, Burr, Henry and Hamilton, has been displayed at this old court-house or City Hall. In 1797, the first session of the Legislature in this city was held at this Hall; the building, however, must have been reconstructed.

Albany owes much of the importance, wealth and prosperity of its earlier days, to the traffic in furs and peltry with the Indians. Being the most important centre of the trade in the country, the Five Nations made it their market, and the Canada Indians found it of easy access by the river and Lake Champlain.

The minutes of the Common Council, for nearly a century after its incorporation are replete with regulations and ordinances for the government of this traffic. Each dwelling house was also a trading house, and the upper story was set apart as the store-house for furs. Some of the old buildings yet remaining in the city, by the iron fixtures in front for drawing up peltry, the shape and location of the doors and windows, the gable end to the street, &c., give evidence of the semi-dwelling and semi-trading house style of architecture, which prevailed at that period, and are now the most striking mementoes of the days gone by.

Kalm, a Swedish naturalist, in his description of Albany in 1749, charges the Albanians with dishonesty and deceit in their commercial intercourse with the Indians, and the accusation is sanctioned in a sketch of our history contained in as respectable a periodical as Hunt's Merchants Magazine. The injustice of this charge is sufficiently proved by the fact that Albany was never attacked by the Indians during the numerous wars which occurred during the Dutch and English Dynasties, and that it also maintained an almost exclusive monopoly of the Indian trade.\*

\*Mrs. Grant in her really interesting memoirs which were written at about the same period with Kalm's visit, records a much more truthful estimate of the character of our early citizens, she says: "The very idea of being ashamed of any thing that was neither vicious nor indecent never entered the head of an Albanian."

The Farming interest was chiefly connected with the manor of Rensselaerwyck. The Dutch Burgher was a trader, and engaged in commercial pursuits. All the vessels for a long time plying between New York and Albany, were owned by Albany merchants. Zeawant (Seawant) or Wampun, was used instead of money, 6 white or 3 black, being equal to one stuiver or penny. Beavers were also another medium of exchange, and the litigation of the courts was principally for the collection of Beavers alleged to be due, instead of money, as at the present time.

At the period we take leave of our city, the principal streets were Yonkers or Gentlemen's street and Handlears street. The former afterwards assumed the name of King, and the latter of Court street. They are at present known as State street and Broadway. The part of Broadway lately known as North Market street was called subsequent to this period, Brewers street; the parsonage of the old Dutch church was situated on this street on the site of the present Bleecker Hall. The streets were not at that time paved, though a side walk 8 feet wide was constructed in 1676. From an order of the magistrates of February 22d, of this year prohibiting the citizens from keeping fodder in their dwelling houses, and another of Nov. 22d, ordering the inhabitants to keep the streets free from fire wood, coopers timber, &c., &c., we are led to believe that the streets were still in a rather primitive condition, and that the worthy Dutch housewives had not yet established their reputation for neatness and cleanliness, or that their voice was not very potent in the regulation of these affairs. A few months since, in excavating Broadway in front of the Museum, at about one foot below the surface, the workmen threw up a stratum of old chips, oyster-shells, &c., 18 inches thick, which were undoubtedly the remains of the old wood piles and rubbish that, notwithstanding the repeated ordinances of the Common Council, filled the streets in its early days, when the fuel was cut in front of the houses, as is common in the country. At the time of which we are speaking all of that part of the city south of Beaver street, and west of Broadway, was owned by the Dutch Church at the corner of Yonkers and Handlears streets, and was denominated and used as "the Pasture," by which name the lower part of the city is still

sometimes designated. The streets in this part of the city, Lydius, Westerlo, &c., were named after ministers of the old Dutch Church. The Stockadoes which served as a defence against the Indians had not yet been built, but a semi-stockade fence or "picquets" were erected, and the city was protected by gates.

The Foxkill and Rутtenkill, then flowed in open currents to the river and were crossed by several wooden bridges. The old Docks had not yet been built, merchandise was conveyed to the shipping in small boats. There were about 150 dwelling houses built which were generally covered with tiles and "mured of bricks" in front according to an ordinance of the Magistrates enacted in 1676. Fort Orange had gone to decay, and a few years before a new earthen Fort defended by palisades had been built on the "Mount," at the head of Yonkers or State street, on the site of St. Peters church, and the street in front of the Geological Rooms. The Mount, at this time was nearly as high as the body of the church at the present time. The Fort was principally built of pine stockades 15 feet high, with four bastions, and besides small arms for 40 men, mounted 9 guns and was garrisoned by 150 men. There were between five and six hundred inhabitants in the city, and about one-third of that number in the Manor of Rensselaerwyck.

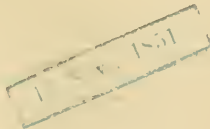
Thus have we traced the principal events connected with Albany, from its foundation as a feeble Fort, and trading house, to its incorporation as a city, with peculiarly liberal privileges and immunities. Unlike New-York it maintained at all times a strict peace and friendship with the Indians, although its intercourse with them was more complicated and extended and its situation more exposed either to open or secret attacks.

The treaty of alliance with the Five Nations, ratified in 1618, on the banks of the Tawalsantha, or the Normanskill, was sedulously preserved, unbroken and unviolated. Its controversies with the Manor of Rensselaerwyck, which at one time threatened to make it only a dependency of the Patroon were finally settled by the Charter, and its undisputed jurisdiction *one* mile in width and sixteen in length through the centre of the manor, established and confirmed. The existence of the city, so far as courts and



a separate organization were concerned, had been merged in that of the colonie until the 10th day of April, 1652, when by Stuyvesant's order a separate jurisdiction was proclaimed. The limits and scope of these reminiscences, will not permit a detail of the subsequent events connected with our municipal history. During the great struggle for National existence, which occurred nearly a century afterward, Albany was among the foremost in the field, the most persevering in the fight, and the most impoverished by the contest. Gloriously and well did she earn the dignity and honor of becoming the favored Capital of the Empire State.

For one, I am proud of being an Albanian; and it is truly with harmonious emotions of pleasure and exultation that I look back upon our Dutch as well as English origin. He who would condemn the one, or despise the other, is unworthy of such ancestry, and libels the memories of both races. The spirit which animated the Dutch against Spanish oppression, of which Sydney said to Queen Elizabeth, "*It is the spirit of God, and is invincible;*" the spirit which flowed in the veins of the Waldenses and French Huguenots, and coursed in the blood of the Puritans of New England, have met here and commingled; and Albanians must be forgetful of their origin, and of their fathers, if they ever prove recreant to Right and Justice, or Civil and Religious Freedom.







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