

DUTCH AMERICAN ENTREPRENEURS

CHAPTER 3

NEW NETHERLAND AND ITS DIRECTORS

New Netherland came into its existence through the international trading and exploration activities of the enterprising Dutch during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Netherlands, as we know it today, also came into existence as an independent nation during the latter part of the sixteenth century. Prior to that time the Netherlands was made up of a number of duchies or dukedoms as well as major cities such as Utrecht, Amsterdam, Haarlem, Leiden, Alkmaar, Delft, and others.

The geographic area of what would become The Netherlands had been under the control of Emperor Charles V, but during the latter part of the sixteenth century the area became under the control of the Spanish king, Philip II, a son of Charles V. During the second half of the sixteenth century, the dukedoms and cities, in what is now the Netherlands, became rebellious and wanted more independence from Spain.

In their quest to become independent the cities and dukedoms were led in their revolt by the Duke of Orange, better known as William the Silent. William the Silent to this day is considered to be, and is revered as, the founder and father of modern day the Netherlands. Interestingly, the Duke of Orange was named after a dukedom in southern France, named Orange. But that did not deter the Duke of Orange to fight for his compatriots in the north. In 1581, during the Eighty Year War of Independence, which lasted from 1568 to 1648, the dukedoms and cities were organized into the Republic of the Seven United Provinces, which was the initial title of what eventually would become The Netherlands. The leading province in the republic was named Holland, and as a result to this day The Netherlands is often referred to as Holland.

The Republic of the Seven United Provinces was governed by a mixture of a parliament and a government cabinet, which went by the title of “Staten Generaal”, or in the English language, “States General”. As overall head of state of the Republic of the Seven United Provinces was the Duke of Orange or William I, and best known as William the Silent. The title he received was “Stadthouder”, literally translated as “City Keeper”, but more liberally translated as “Head of State”.

THE EXPLORATION PERIOD

Even during the time while the country was under Spanish control, the Dutch were seafarers and explorers and were essentially driven by the opportunity of trade with foreign nations and territories. The Dutch model of trade and exploration was probably

Spain and/or Portugal, also seafaring nations, and traders, explorers and colonizers. After all, the control of Spain over the Dutch territory, brought the Dutch in close contact with the Spanish.

The first major Dutch exploration company was the Dutch East India Company [DEI], and it was this company that sponsored the original exploration in North America during the early part of the seventeenth century. In 1607, the DEI sponsored expeditions, led by Captain Henry Hudson, to what is now known as the Hudson Bay to explore the feasibility of a northern route to the East Indies. The expedition discovered that, if there was a northern route, it was blocked by ice.

But the DEI did not give up easily. So in 1609, Captain Henry Hudson was commissioned to explore alternative routes to the East Indies. Captain Hudson first attempted to find a route in the easterly direction by way of a northerly route. But again he quickly discovered around the island of Nova Zembla that ice was again a problem. He then turned around, crossed the Atlantic, and decided to explore the North American coast line along its eastern shore.

Prior to that time, Dutch seafaring explorers and traders apparently had already been exploring and trading for fur pelts, and especially beaver pelts, in the lower area of the Hudson River. We must assume therefore that Captain Henry Hudson knew of the Hudson River. And in September of 1609, he arrived at the mouth of the Hudson River, and went upstream to see if it possibly led to a route to the East Indies.

The mouth of the Hudson River was of course the present location of what is now the New York City anchored tri-state area. Captain Hudson decided to go north on the river for a distance of about 150 miles, or as far as navigation allowed. He ended up at what is today Albany, New York. It is not clear what the explorers did at Albany, but Albany, which the Dutch would later name Beverwyck, would within a few years, become the second most important center of Dutch influence in the new world.

The voyage up the Hudson River also confirmed that expansion of the fur trade with the Indians offered considerable possibilities, and it is safe to assume that Captain Hudson returned to Amsterdam with a load of beaver pelts, a valuable commodity in the old world at that time.

From 1611 to 1614, the territory and adjacent waters at the mouth of the Hudson River were extensively explored by Captains Adriaen Block and Hendrick Christiaensz. Based on their explorations, Adriaen Block produced a map of the explored area. The area covers the east coast of North America from latitude 38 to 45 degrees north. Based on the map, the States General of the Dutch Republic of the Seven United Provinces, essentially the Dutch government, claimed the land in 1614 for the Republic of the Seven United Provinces. To implement their claim, the States General built Fort Nassau on an island in the Hudson River near present day Albany, New York. Fort Nassau became the first settlement, largely a trading post, in what was then named New Netherland.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW NETHERLAND

From 1614 to 1618, a company named the New Netherland Company was chartered by the States General to expand the exploration of the claimed New Netherland area. Other companies became involved in the exploration during the 1618 to 1624 period. The initial motivation for all of the interest in the area was the treasured fur pelt, largely beaver pelts, but also pelts from other animals.

By 1624, some of the exploration companies were merged with the Dutch West India Company [DWIC], and the States General designated the DWIC officially as the only company to trade in the area of New Netherland. The States General also designated DWIC to serve as the contractor for the Republic of the Seven United Provinces to explore and manage the newly claimed lands. The remaining exploration companies were prohibited from trading in the New Netherland area by the States General.

And in 1624 the States General officially established New Netherland as a province of the Dutch Republic of the Seven United Provinces. Since the Dutch had been colonized themselves, they were apparently reluctant to call their claimed territory a colony. So naming it a province of the new republic was an easy way out. The northern border of the claimed territory was changed to latitude 42 degrees north, from the original 45 degrees north, so as to not interfere with some of the British land claims. Also the first immigrants, consisting of 30 Flemish and Walloon families arrived on Noten Eylant, now named Governors' Island, located just south of the present Manhattan, in 1624.

The basis for claiming New Netherland as a province of the Dutch Republic was based on the following three criteria. 1. The 1624 claim on the territory was made on the basis of the Law of Nations; 2. The area was discovered in 1609 by Captain Henry Hudson who was then in the employ of the Dutch East India Company, a company chartered by the States General of the Dutch Republic; and 3. The territory was taken in possession through permanent settlement.

ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST SETTLERS AND THE FIRST TWO DIRECTORS

The year 1624 was therefore an important year in the history of New Netherland. It was the year that New Netherland was officially claimed and became part of The Republic of the Seven United Provinces. The first families to settle in New Netherland were brought over on a ship named, "Eendracht", in early 1624. Some of the settlers were taken to what is currently Albany, New York, where Fort Orange was under construction. And others were left off at locations near the Connecticut River to establish a home base there. More settlers would follow that first group in the same year.

The next group of 30 families came over on a ship appropriately named "Nieu Nederlandt", several months following the arrival of the first ship, but still in 1624. The ship was under the command of Captain Cornelis Jacobsz Mey who would become the first director of New Netherland. The 30 families were let off at Noten Eylant, presently

Governor's Island, just south of Manhattan Island, New York, City. This group comprised the new settlers for what would become the colony of New Amsterdam.

The following year, in 1625, four more ships arrived bringing 30 more settlers, and their families, for the New Amsterdam colony, plus over one hundred horses and cows, and numerous pigs and sheep. The objective clearly was to begin agricultural activities immediately to provide for the needs of the new settlers. Also in that year, 1625, the new and more permanent director, Willem Verhulst, arrived. Verhulst took over the directorship duties from Captain Mey, who probably was more interested in doing more exploration than in managing the new fledgling colony.

THE NEXT FOUR NEW NETHERLAND DIRECTORS

The directorship of the new colony, with Verhulst in charge, apparently did not work out well. He was accused of mismanagement and ineptness, and as a result he was replaced the following year, in 1626, by Peter Minuit. Peter Minuit became essentially the first permanent director, and served in that capacity until 1632. In his first year as director, Minuit purchased Manhattan Island from the Indians for miscellaneous supplies and tools useful to the Indians. The value of the supplies and tools was estimated at about 60 guilders or about \$24. The purchase was needed because the States General was insistent that no lands should be taken from the Indians. Instead the land should be purchased from the Indians for whatever reasonable commodities the Indians found useful for themselves.

During Peter Minuit's directorship, the idea of the patroonships was developed by a few directors in DWIC. They probably saw it as a way to encourage settlement in the colony as well as a way to earn a good return on their investment. The States General approved the patroonship plan, and to a degree it had the expected results as envisaged.

Those allowed to become patroons were assigned certain blocks of land which they had to purchase from the Indians. Upon ownership, the patroons then were obligated to populate their assigned lands with settlers. The following regulations were instituted for the patroonship system. 1. The patroons had to settle a minimum of 50 settlers over age 15 on the land; 2. The patroons had to stock the farms with implements, and could only charge modest rents; 3. The patroons had to provide a pastor and a schoolmaster for each settlement; and 4. The lessees of the farms had to sell their grain crops to the patroons.

Although not mentioned above, the patroons probably also had to provide transportation from the homeland to the settlement in New Netherland, or at least lend funds to the immigrants for their transportation. Since not many of the settlers had the necessary resources to pay their own way to the new world, it clearly was an opportunity to move to a new promised land.

Peter Minuit's directorship ended in 1632 because of some dispute with the DWIC or the States General. Minuit was replaced by an acting director, Sebastaan Jansen Krol, who was in charge until the following year, 1633. In 1633, the new director, Wouter Van

Twiller, arrived from Amsterdam to take charge of the province. Van Twiller remained director until 1638, when he also was replaced.

The new director, Willem Kieft, arrived in 1638, and served as director until 1647. His directorship was probably the worst of all the directorships. Kieft felt that to keep the Indians subservient and pliable, there was a need to be autocratic with them, and if that did not work to exterminate them. The result was that the Indians revolted and began to attack the settlers in outlying areas. The result was a massacre of the settlers by the Indians and vice versa. The settlers suffered enormously because of the lack of protection. From that point on Kieft's directorship was doomed, and he was forthwith replaced by the States General in Amsterdam.

In 1647, director Petrus Stuyvesant arrived and took over as director. He served reasonably well, and became the director with the longest tenure. He served until 1664, the year the British took over control and possession of the territory. Stuyvesant had made efforts during his directorship to make peace with the British. Stuyvesant was the one who ceded the Connecticut River region to the British in 1650.

The agreement to cede the Connecticut River region was part of the Treaty of Hartford in 1650. The Connecticut River territory consisted of the territory east of the river and also the territory west of the river for a distance of 50 miles. The DWIC did not recognize the Treaty of Hartford, but there was not much they could do about it. It is also not clear why there was such disagreement between Stuyvesant and his employer, the DWIC.

THE TAKEOVER OF NEW NETHERLAND BY THE BRITISH

In 1664, the takeover by the British was relatively peaceful. Four English frigates appeared at the southern tip of Manhattan and demanded surrender. Since Stuyvesant had not been able to build up a defense force for lack of money, the province of New Netherland was defenseless. Also the population of New Netherland was not happy with the Stuyvesant administration, because it had been unable to provide protection against the Indians, and as a result was unwilling to defend the province against the British.

During the 1672-1674 time period, the Dutch were again at war with the British. So they decided to organize a fleet and attempt to take back New Netherland. They sent a fleet of 21 ships to the British colony, and the British governor had no choice but to surrender. So in 1673, New York, formerly New Amsterdam, again came into the hands of the Dutch, who named it Orange. They appointed a director by the name of Anthony Colve. Colve's directorship lasted only for one year, following which the British were able to take over New Netherland by treaty. The Treaty of Westminster, in 1672, ended the Anglo-Dutch War, and New Netherland was ceded to the British.

Although the former Dutch province of New Netherland came under British rule, it remained Dutch in custom, language and culture until the first half of the nineteenth

century. Also a dialect, called Jersey Dutch, was still spoken in Bergen and Passaic counties of New Jersey until the beginning of the twentieth century.

Below follows a listing of the six directors of New Netherland, during its official existence from 1624 to 1664. Omitted are the three interim directors, who only served either briefly, or were never appointed officially. They are: Adraen Van Joris, 1623; Sebastiaen Jansz Krol, 1632-1633; and Anthony Colve, 1673-1674.

For more information on the directors of New Netherland click on to the brief biographical profiles of the six directors listed below in the order they served as directors of New Netherland during the period from 1624 to 1664. The six directors were:

Cornelis Jacobszoon Mey, 1624-1625,
 Willem Verhulst, 1625-1626,
 Peter Minuit, 1626-1632,
 Wouter Van Twiller, 1633-1638,
 Willem Kieft, 1638-1647, and
 Petrus [Peter] Stuyvesant, 1647-1664.

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Painting of
Peter Stuyvesant [1592-1672], circa 1660



Peter Minuit [1580-1638]



A painting of Wouter van Twiller [1580-1636] by Washington Allston



Reprint of 1650 map of New Netherland