



**Frederick A.O.
Schwarz
Children's
Center**



Dennis J. Maika **Trade In New Amsterdam**



Trade In New Amsterdam



PREVIOUS PAGE (TOP):

Pearl Street Above Coenties Slip. ca. 1865.
29.100.1635

PREVIOUS PAGE (BOTTOM):

Samuel H. (Samuel Herman) Gottscho
(1875-1971). View of lower Manhattan
skyline showing the East River from the
St. George Hotel [Brooklyn] showing docks
and ships. January 12, 1933. 88.1.1.2648

ABOVE:

Flagon. 17th century. 59.183.1

Manhattan's importance as a center for international trade was recognized soon after Henry Hudson returned from his voyage of discovery in 1609. Within three years, Dutch entrepreneurs organized several trading voyages to the Hudson River Valley. To resolve competitive struggles that quickly developed, the Dutch government organized the New Netherland Company in 1614, granting exclusive trading rights to a group of private merchants. Before the Dutch considered settling Manhattan, they most certainly wanted to trade there.

With the resumption of war between Spain and the Netherlands in 1621, the newly organized, state-sponsored West India Company (WIC) took control of New Netherland and its fur trade and made New Amsterdam the colony's "staple port" — the capital through which all trade must pass. After several years of unsuccessfully trying to make the colony profitable, the WIC abandoned its fur trading monopoly in 1639 and private Dutch entrepreneurs once again entered New Netherland commerce. By the early 1650s, representatives of private Dutch investors became the founders of Manhattan's indigenous merchant community. They successfully petitioned the Dutch States General for their own municipal government, which provided order and stability necessary to protect and expand their trade. Officially chartered in 1653, the City of New Amsterdam was envied by merchants in neighboring English colonies.

By the 1660s, New Amsterdam had truly become a prominent international and regional entrepot, a center for the exchange of goods from a wide variety of sources. As animal furs and skins arrived from Beverwijck (now Albany) and the South River (now Delaware River), they were exchanged for a variety of textiles, earthenware pots and jugs, glasses, iron tools, a variety of wines, beers, and brandies, and assorted manufactured goods sent primarily from Amsterdam. Many of these European goods, especially duffels and tools, were sold to the Indians who provided Dutch middlemen with furs. Native American wampum (seawan), produced by Indians on Long Island and the New England coast and highly valued by Mohawks, Mahicans, and Munsee, was an essential item in these transactions. English tobacco growers in Virginia and Maryland sold thousands of pounds of "Chesapeake leaf" to Manhattan merchants, who shipped it to the thriving tobacco market in Holland. From the Caribbean, especially the Dutch colonies of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, Manhattan merchants imported salt, sugar, horses, dyewood, lemons and lemon juice, even parrots and parakeets. By the mid-1660s, the trade in enslaved Africans began, with small numbers of West Africans sent to New Amsterdam from Curaçao. In exchange, Hudson Valley grains, meat, peas, and other food supplies were shipped south to the Caribbean. Manhattan's thriving commerce even drew some New Englanders into its orbit. Contrary to the popular myth of New Netherland's decline, New Amsterdam trade was blossoming at the time of the English invasion of 1664.

If we try to imagine what was involved in trading merchandize across thousands of miles of ocean, we quickly realize that, like today, there was more to commerce than simply loading and unloading goods on a ship. How did 17th-century merchants conduct their business?

Most trading voyages began as temporary partnership agreements, what the Dutch called a "rederij." For a voyage beginning in Amsterdam, investors signed legally binding contracts specifying what goods would be transported, when and where goods were to be delivered, and the quantity of goods expected on the return trip. They would use one of their own ships or hire one, and identify expenses involved in freighting goods from one place to another which included the salaries for the ship's captain and crew. Each rederij partner would agree to pay a certain percentage of the initial costs and expect an equal percentage of the profit. To allow for the considerable risks involved in trading over great distances and spans of time, merchants also created insurance contracts; in

ABOUT

Dennis J. Maika

Growing up in New York City, I was always aware of a Dutch past but never really understood it. I have one lasting impression of early New Amsterdam from seeing the Castello Plan on display when I visited the Museum of the City of New York with my class from P.S. 144 many years ago. The topic was never much discussed in classes after that. Especially in college when, as a history major interested in colonial America, I learned only about New England and the South. My eyes were opened in graduate school by Prof. Patricia Bonomi and her influential book about colonial New York. When I returned for my doctoral studies, with Prof. Bonomi as my mentor, I came across a collection of Dutch notary records from 17th-century Amsterdam translated into English. As I read through them — more than 1100 documents — I realized that the story typically told about early Manhattan was not only oversimplified but actually wrong. There was a much richer story to be told. What I learned through these discoveries has informed what I've written in this curriculum guide, as well as the book I am currently completing.

Dennis J. Maika is currently an Associate for Education at the New Netherland Institute and was the Senior Scholar in Residence at the New Netherland Research Center from 2012–2013. He received his Ph.D. in History from New York University; his dissertation was awarded the Hendricks Manuscript Prize. He is a Fellow of the Holland Society of New York, the New Netherland Institute, and the New York Academy of History. As a historian of colonial New York, he has served as a consultant for local history and education projects and has written numerous articles and papers. As a professional educator, he taught History and Psychology at the high school and college levels for several decades and won several teaching awards.

wartime, the threat of capture and confiscation was taken into account. All of these legal documents were prepared by notaries, who were highly trained legal experts. 17th-century commerce did not use lawyers as we know them today.

Upon arriving in New Amsterdam, the goods would be unloaded at the city wharf, then inspected and weighed by government officials. Taxes, in the form of duties on imports and exports, were assessed on each cargo and paid to the West India Company. Those who tried to avoid paying these taxes, either by falsifying cargo lists or by unloading outside the city, were arrested and tried as smugglers. If found guilty, they faced confiscation of their cargo and fines.

With the unloading process completed, New Amsterdam's merchants stored the goods in their warehouses or homes, then delivered them to customers in Manhattan or elsewhere in the region. Since hard currency was in short supply, sales were usually not made in cash. Instead, a variety of local commodities — beaver pelts, tobacco, wampum — were used as a medium of exchange, valued in Dutch guilders. This was more sophisticated than a simple barter economy. More typically, imported goods were delivered on credit. Both creditor and debtor signed legally binding bonds stipulating the purpose of the loan, the amount involved, interest charged, and duration of the loan. If these bonds were disputed, creditors and debtors would personally argue their case before the city magistrates, who were typically Manhattan's leading merchants.

Reputation was an important consideration for Manhattan merchants as they prepared their exports for shipment. The highest quality, full-size beaver skins were identified as “merchantable” in contracts and differentiated from pieces of lesser quality. With goods like tobacco and food stuffs, merchants relied on government regulation for quality and quantity control. All tobacco was inspected, its quality verified and certified. The same quality controls applied to exported food stuffs like salted meat and bacon. The city enforced a uniform system of weights and measures guaranteeing conformity to the “custom of old Amsterdam.” The city charged the merchants a fee for such services and violators were prosecuted and fined.

Many Manhattan residents were involved in trade. Certainly, there was a specific group of individuals whose primary occupation was commerce and some, with family connections and greater success, achieved more prominence than others. But in New Amsterdam, bakers, brewers, tavern owners, and those in many other occupations, women as well as men, even WIC officials, could participate in the city's ever-expanding commerce. As early as 1654, Nicasius de Sille, one of Stuyvesant's most trusted councilors, remarked that “All the people here are traders.” Clearly, the commercial roots of today's New York City lie deep in 17th-century Dutch Manhattan.

Biography of Cornelis Steenwyck

One of the few original images we have from 17th-century New Amsterdam is a painting of Cornelis Steenwyck. An oval portrait, depicting a wealthy man arrayed in the finest clothes of his day, exuding confidence and seemingly at peace with his accomplishments, sits atop an illustration of New Amsterdam. The special connection between the painting's main subject and the city that supported him was apparently a message Steenwyck himself was trying to convey: he personally commissioned the artist. That the portrait was created soon after New Amsterdam had been renamed New York tells us that Steenwyck saw himself as a transitional figure proud of past accomplishments, confident in current conditions, and optimistic about his future and that of his city. At the moment of the English invasion in 1664, Steenwyck was one of New Amsterdam's most prominent citizens. He was born in Haarlem, the Netherlands, c. 1626 and began his trading career in 1651 when he arrived in New Amsterdam representing Amsterdam's wealthy Van Hoornbeeck family. His overseas connections grounded his commercial activities in New Amsterdam but his acute sense of new commercial opportunities and an assertive — some could say ruthless — pursuit of potential markets, especially in the fur and tobacco trades, helped him to quickly emerge as one of New Amsterdam's most successful merchants.

Due to his wealth and commercial prominence, Steenwyck became a pivotal figure in municipal government, serving three terms as schepens and becoming a burgomaster of the City of New Amsterdam in 1664. In that position, he was one of five Manhattan residents chosen by Director-General Petrus Stuyvesant to negotiate the city's transfer of authority from Dutch to English control.

The 1664 agreement made it easy for Steenwyck and his fellow merchants to quickly adapt to new commercial circumstances. Steenwyck skillfully negotiated a place for Manhattan's merchants as "denizens" in the nascent English empire, and formed new partnerships with English merchants while continuing his relationships with Dutch partners in the Netherlands. By the early 1670s, he was the second wealthiest man in New York.

Steenwyck remained an important political leader in the decade after the English invasion. Under the English municipal system, Steenwyck served first as an alderman and then as Mayor of New York City in 1668 and 1669. He also served on English Governor Francis Lovelace's Council. In the chaotic months when the city was retaken by a Dutch fleet in 1673, and then returned to England in 1674, Steenwyck was chosen by Manhattan's citizens to help maintain order and stability. Soon after the arrival of English Governor Edmund Andros, Steenwyck and several Dutch city leaders were arrested and briefly imprisoned for trying to maintain certain civic rights he helped guarantee in the previous decade. With the controversy resolved, Steenwyck returned to his commercial activity and eventually to political leadership, serving his third term as New York City's mayor from 1683–1684.

Cornelis Steenwyck died in early 1685, leaving only his wife of 27 years, Margareta de Riemer. Each of the couple's seven children died before reaching adulthood. Although denied a personal family legacy, Steenwyck's life as a prominent entrepreneur and influential political leader made him an important transitional figure in early New York's history, someone who preserved early Dutch traditions and practices, and carried them into the late 17th century and beyond.



Pearl Street Above Coenties Slip. ca. 1865.
29.100.1635

Trade in New Amsterdam

LESSON 3

Introducing the Topic

New Amsterdam quickly became an important place for trade, both regionally and internationally, soon after Henry Hudson returned to Europe from his 1609 voyage. Within three years, Dutch entrepreneurs were organizing trading voyages to the place now called the Hudson River Valley. Sailing ships loaded and unloaded near the south tip of the island, and goods were stored in homes and warehouses nearby. Everything that was sent to New Netherland had to pass through the staple port of New Amsterdam and everything sent from New Netherland had to pass through it as well. Animal furs and tobacco from New Netherland and other North American colonies were shipped here, traded, and sold to European markets. Goods imported from Amsterdam included cloth, earthenware pots and jugs, glasses, and other manufactured goods. Dutch colonies in the Caribbean also sent goods they produced to New Amsterdam, as well as enslaved people. Grains, meat, peas, and other food supplies produced on farms were a major export from New Amsterdam to the colonies in the Caribbean. There was a limited supply of cash in the colony, so sales were usually made by exchanging goods.

Essential Questions

What goods were bought, sold, and shipped in New Amsterdam? Who were the traders? How did New Amsterdam function as a global trading center?

Vocabulary List

- | | | |
|----------------|------------|----------|
| - Alderman | - Exchange | - Seaman |
| - Burgomaster | - Export | - Trade |
| - Colony | - Goods | - Voyage |
| - Commercial | - Import | - Wampum |
| - Entrepreneur | - Schepens | - Wharf |

Introducing the Sources

In this lesson, newly digitized artifacts from the Museum of the City of New York's collection will help students learn about New Amsterdam as an important center for international trade.

Flagon. 17th century. 59.183.1

- This pear-shaped pewter flagon with a strap handle was probably used for containing and drinking liquids such as beer or wine.
- It is made of pewter, a metal alloy mostly made of tin. Metals were not easy to find in this region. Metal items such as this flagon had to be imported.



OBJECT BASED QUESTIONS

- What do you think this object was used for?
- What do you think it is made of?
- Why would metal objects be important things to send from Amsterdam?

Nova Amsteldam. ca. 1670. 38.512

- This image shows a view of New Amsterdam from south of the town, in New York Harbor.
- There is a dock at the tip of the island, near the center of the picture, where goods would be inspected and weighed by government officials. Traders had to pay taxes for their imports and exports to the Dutch West India Company. If they didn't pay, they could be arrested as smugglers. Their cargo might be confiscated, and they could be fined.
- Animal furs and skins arrived from Beverwijk, the city that became Albany, and the South River, now called the Delaware River.
- English settlers in Virginia and Maryland sold thousands of pounds of "Chesapeake leaf" (tobacco) to Manhattan merchants, who sent it on to markets in Holland.
- Dutch colonies in the Caribbean, including Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, sent salt, sugar, horses, dyewood, lemons and lemon juice, parrots, and parakeets. By the mid-1660s, they sent enslaved West Africans.



DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS

- Why are there so many ships in the harbor?
- Where could ships or boats go to load and unload their goods in New Amsterdam?
- What might some of these ships contain that were for sale?
- Where could goods be stored after they were unloaded from the ships? What buildings do you see that might be good places for storage?

Declaration of the West India Company acknowledging the sale of the Company's farm on Manhattan Island to Jan Jansz Damen on behalf of Petrus Stuyvesant. March 12, 1651. 35.431.1

- This earliest dated document in the Museum of the City of New York's collection records the purchase of property by Director-General Petrus Stuyvesant, through his agent Jan Jansz Damen, from the Dutch West India Company, on March 12, 1651. This was the Company's Bouverie (farm) No. 1, where Stuyvesant lived after the English conquest until his death in 1672. This deed gives him title to a dwelling house, barn, barrack, land (about 120 acres), six cows, two horses, and two African slaves for the sum of 6400 guilders.
- Petrus Stuyvesant was the last Director-General of New Netherland from 1647-1664.



DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS

- Whose name do you see on this document? Who is this person? [If students have seen the Pearl Street and Coenties Slip image in the lesson on Native Americans, encourage students to make a connection between the name and the image.]
- When was this document written?
- What is this document about? What is it recording?
- People in New Amsterdam bought and sold more than trade goods. What was Stuyvesant buying from the Dutch West India Company? How much did he pay?
- Why was farm land valuable to settlers in New Netherland?

**Further Reading:
Cornelis Steenwyck**

Have students read Dennis J. Maika's biography of Cornelis Steenwyck (or read it out loud to younger students). How does the story relate to the images and artifacts included in this section?

- Cornelis Steenwyck was very proud of his city. When he had his portrait painted, it included an illustration of New Amsterdam.
- He left his home city of Haarlem in the Netherlands (namesake of today's Harlem in Manhattan), and came to New Amsterdam in 1651 to take up a career in trading, representing the wealthy Van Hoornbeeck family from Amsterdam. He arrived in a ship that probably looked very much like the ones we see in the *Nova Amsteldam* image.
- He traded especially in furs and tobaccos, becoming one of New Amsterdam's most successful merchants.
- Eventually, he became so wealthy and respected that he earned a place in local government. He served three terms as schepens, or city councilor, and in 1664, he became burgomaster of the City of New Amsterdam, a role similar to that of mayor.

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- In 1664, the English took over New Amsterdam. As burgomaster, Cornelis Steenwyck was asked by Petrus Stuyvesant to help negotiate the transition. He was so successful that he stayed in the City of New York, eventually serving three terms as mayor. He helped preserve Dutch traditions and practices as New Amsterdam became New York.

Activity

Book a trip to the Museum of the City of New York for the hands-on, interactive History Lab program, *Life in New Amsterdam*. Using a 3D scale model of the Castello Plan measuring 11 x 12 feet, together with objects, maps, and images, students will learn about the daily lives of the settlers who lived and worked in New Amsterdam. The class will complete a map of the 17th century trading town to represent their findings.

To learn more about arranging a fieldtrip for your students, visit <http://www.mcny.org/education>

Contemporary Connections

How do we connect modern day New York City to its Dutch roots? Have students read Dennis J. Maika's account of how he became interested in New Amsterdam (or read out loud to younger students).

What inspired Dennis Maika to find out more about New Amsterdam?

- He saw the Castello Plan, an 11x12 foot, three-dimensional plan depicting the city in 1660, at the Museum of the City of New York, and read more about colonial New York. He also read 17th-century Dutch documents translated into English, such as the Declaration of the West India Company acknowledging the sale of the Company's farm on Manhattan Island to Jan Jansz Damen on behalf of Petrus Stuyvesant.

Have you ever been inspired to learn more about your city by an artifact you've seen or a book you've read?

What aspects of Dutch heritage can we see in New York City today?

- Trade: Goods still come to New York City from all over the world to be purchased and used here, or shipped to another port. Invite students to think about where their clothing, food, and electronics come from. Check labels that reveal their country of origin.
- Not only goods are bought and sold here. The New York Stock Exchange is one of New York City's most famous — and globally important — institutions. Stock traders buy and sell shares in companies all over the world.
- Entrepreneurial spirit: People from all over the world still come to New York City in search of opportunities.