BRIEF III OF IV

New York City's Dutch-Era Origins and the Seal/Flag Date Controversy

NEW AMSTERDAM 1613–1674 · TWO LAWS, TWO YEARS

RESEARCH BRIEF · VERBATIM EVIDENCE QUOTES · SHARED CITATION LEDGER

III

From Juan Rodriguez to the Articles of Surrender,
the Minuit purchase and Kieft's War,
and why the seal reads 1625.

Research brief for exhibit drafting; verbatim evidence for every cited source is stored in the shared citation ledger. Unfetched claims are marked [unverified].

1. The seal/flag date controversy

The City Seal bears the date 1625, which the Administrative Code calls "the year of the establishment of New Amsterdam."[21] The current seal dates from 1915 and was most recently modified in 1977.[19]

Two laws, two years. Council President Paul O'Dwyer introduced his bill (Int. No. 568) on June 16, 1974, timed to Amsterdam's 700th anniversary.[22] Both the source brief (single 1977 Beame signing) and the Wikipedia "changed in 1975" note are incomplete — there were two separate laws. Flag, 1975: the committee voted December 17, 1974, "but it was not until the adoption of Local Law No. 3, 1975 that the change of date was officially recognized for the flag of the city."[22] Wikipedia's seal article agrees: "Despite objections from historians and his advisers, Mayor Abraham Beame signed O'Dwyer's bill changing the date on the city flag in 1975. A separate bill to modify the city seal in the same manner was approved two years later."[19] Seal, 1977: "The bill was passed and approved as Local Law No. 98 and signed by Mayor Abraham D. Beame, on December 30, 1977."[22] The NYT confirms Beame "approved Mr. O'Dwyer's bill to change the date on the flag" in early 1975, the same day he renamed the Borough of Richmond to Staten Island.[20]

The aides' doubts. The famous quote is genuine and belongs to George Aridas, aide to First Deputy Mayor James A. Cavanagh: "In researching the validity of this proposal, I find no basis for 1625 as the founding date."[20][18] A second aide, Hank Walter, urged veto, arguing "the city actually became a legal Dutch entity in 1624 when a Dutch charter was given to that effect" — the bill was "Paul O'Dwyer's attempt to make us a Dutch city instead of an English one."[20] Beame signed anyway.

Why 1625? O'Dwyer cast 1625 as the year Manhattan was "designated by the Dutch West India Company as the seat of government," 1664 as mere allegiance to England;[20] 1624 lost partly because its settlers were mostly Walloons (Belgians), muddying the "honor the Dutch" theme. Edwin G. Burrows: "You have to wonder if they didn't pick either 1626 or 1625 just to beat Boston, settled in 1630."[18] Borough historian Michael Miscione: "It is simply wrong... The first founding settlers of New York City landed here in 1624."[20] 1625's most notable event: "Dutch settlers moved their cattle to Lower Manhattan from Governors Island."[20]

Flag 1915 (verified). "The flag was approved on April 6, 1915, and first unveiled to the public on June 24."[18] The 1915 redesign had changed the seal's date from 1686 (Dongan Charter) to 1664.[19]

2. Dutch-era timeline

1613–1614. Juan Rodriguez of Santo Domingo "was the first documented non-indigenous inhabitant to live on Manhattan Island," arriving 1613 and staying.[28] Fort Nassau (North River) was "established 1614" on Castle Island near Albany.[32]

1624–1626. In May 1624 the *Nieu Nederlandt* landed thirty families on Noten Eylandt (Governors Island), "the landing place of the first settlers in New Netherland."[37] That year "30 Protestant Walloons (people from what is today southern Belgium)" arrived, eighteen building Fort Orange (1624), replacement for flood-prone Fort Nassau.[42] Fort Amsterdam is dated 1626 ("Starting with the founding and establishment of Fort Amsterdam in 1626")[36] though 1625 is when New Amsterdam was "designated as the capital of the province" and the site "staked out directly south of Bowling Green."[25] Sarah Rapelje, born 9 June 1625 at Fort Orange, was "the first European Christian female... born in New Netherland," daughter of Joris Jansen Rapelje and Catalina Trico, Walloon Calvinists who "sailed on board the ship Eendracht... in 1624"; she was later "granted a large tract of land in the Wallabout in Brooklyn."[27] "Her descendants include Humphrey Bogart... Tom Brokaw" plus Johnny Carson, Howard Dean, Clare Balding, and others.[27]

The Minuit purchase, 1626. Per the Schaghen letter, Minuit and Walloon colonists "acquired the island of Manhattan on 24 May 1626... in exchange for traded goods worth 60 guilders, often said to be worth US$24."[35] The $24 is a 19th-century artifact: "In 1844, New York historian John Romeyn Brodhead converted the figure of Fl 60 (or 60 guilders) to US$24"; modern equivalents run ~$1,000 (2006) to "~$1,143 U.S. dollars as of 2020."[26] Canarsie problem: the Canarsee "are credited with selling the island of Manhattan to the Dutch, even though they only occupied its lower reaches"; Minuit's counterparty Seyseys happily sold land "actually mostly controlled by the Weckquaesgeeks."[44][25]

Kieft's War, 1643–45. On February 25, 1643, colonists "descended on the camps at Pavonia... and killed 120 Indians, including women and children"[40] — though the Public History Project counts "At least 80 people... killed at Pavonia, and 40 at Corlear's Hook."[60] The brief's "~80" sits at the low end; exhibit copy should read 80–120 plus ~40. Per O'Callaghan, "Eleven tribes...proclaimed open war against the Dutch";[61] a 1,500-strong force invaded in late 1643, and the truce came in August 1645.[40] Kieft was recalled and succeeded by Stuyvesant.[40]

Stuyvesant, 1647–1664. He "served as the director-general of New Netherland from 1647 to 1664"; "during his eighteen year administration, the population grew from 2,000 to 8,000."[29][59] Colony-wide, "By 1664, the population of New Netherland had risen to almost 9,000 people, 2,500 of whom lived in New Amsterdam" — the 2,000→8,000 figure is an approximation; flag it as such.[25]

1664 and after. On August 27, 1664, "four English frigates under the command of Col. Richard Nicolls sailed into New Amsterdam's harbor"; Stuyvesant "capitulated by signing Articles of Surrender," and in June 1665 the town was "reincorporated under English law and renamed 'New York.'"[38][48] Thomas Willett "was appointed the first mayor of the town (June 1665) with the approval of the English and Dutch alike."[31] Breda (1667): "The war ended in a Dutch victory in 1667, but the colony remained under English rule as stipulated in the Treaty of Breda."[38] In 1673 the Dutch retook the city and "renamed the city New Orange," installing Anthony Colve;[35] Westminster (February 1674) "provided for the return of the colony of New Netherland (now New York) to England and renewed the Treaty of Breda of 1667."[41]

3. Dutch place-name etymologies

- Coney Island — likely from "the Dutch word for rabbit" (konijn); Irish and surname theories compete.[33]
- Bowery — "an anglicization of the Dutch [bouwerij], derived from an antiquated Dutch word for 'farm.'"[43]
- Breukelen — the Utrecht town "is the namesake of the borough of Brooklyn."[34]
- Harlem — "Originally a Dutch village, formally organized in 1658, it is named after the city of Haarlem in the Netherlands."[45]
- Greenwich Village — "Its name comes from Groenwijck, Dutch for 'Green District.'"[62]
- Flushing — "It was named Vlissingen, after the Dutch city of Vlissingen" (1645).[49]
- Staten Island — recorded as "Staaten Eylandt"; by 1653 the Commonality of New Amsterdam "included the isle of Manhattan, Staaten Eylandt, Pavonia, and the Lange Eylandt towns."[35]

4. Discrepancies and open items

1. Fort Amsterdam 1625/1626 — sited 1625, built from 1626; use "1625/26" in copy.[25][36] 2. Pavonia toll — 80–120 killed at Pavonia plus ~40 at Corlears Hook; "~80" alone understates it.[40][60] 3. Wikipedia's "69 united tribes" in Kieft's War is likely a typo ("6 or 9"); the sourced figure is eleven tribes via O'Callaghan. Do not use.[40][61] 4. [unverified] EBSCO's "80 to 120" range — seen only in a search snippet, not fetched. 5. [unverified] Joep de Koning's defense of 1625 ("deliberate decision of a governing council") — not extracted as evidence; check the tolerancepark PDF before quoting.

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