

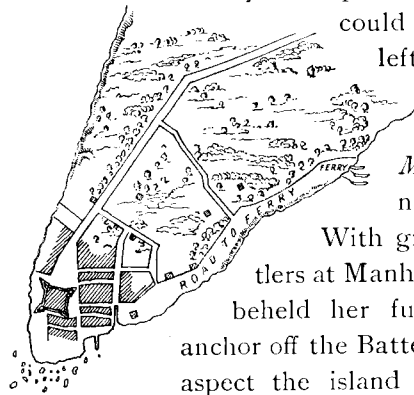
II. THE DUTCH DYNASTY—PETER MINUIT.

PETER MINUIT was a native of Cleves, Rhenish Prussia, and was an old servant of the East India Company. He had had experience in governing new countries, and this, with a kind, conciliating disposition and an inborn faculty for governing, made him one of the very best persons for the place that could have been chosen. He

left Amsterdam in December, 1625, in a ship called the *Sea Mew* and bearing a large number of colonists.

With great joy the busy settlers at Manhattan on May 4, 1626, beheld her furl sail and come to anchor off the Battery. A very different aspect the island presented to Minuit from that it now bears. Primeval forests hid the Jersey shore and the outline of Manhattan.

A range of low, craggy hills covered with forests stretched through the center of the island from the Battery to Spuyten Duyvil. There were pretty grassy valleys between, and along the shores wide marshes stretched away to the north. At the present Canal Street



Manhattan

they extended quite across the island, so that at very high tides the waters of the East River flowed over into the Hudson. In sheltered valleys under the crags were the cornfields and bark wigwams of the Indians and the rude log cabins of the settlers. Cow paths crossed the marshes and wound in and out between the crags, often penetrating dense thickets of blackberry vines, creepers, grapevines, and bushes. Wolves, bears, and panthers lurked in these recesses. In their letters home the people often complained of the deer and wild turkeys that broke in and ate up their crops.

As his first step Minuit had been directed to purchase the island of its Indian owners. He therefore called a conference of the chiefs and head men, probably before he disembarked his company. You will find in Diedrich Knickerbocker's "History of New York" a very amusing account of the transaction; but Knickerbocker's sense of humor often played havoc with his historical accuracy. The scene as it actually occurred lacked no element of the strange and picturesque. On one side were the Hollanders, in long-skirted coats, some loose, some girt at the waist with a military sash, velvet breeches ending at the knee in black Holland stockings, and on their feet high military boots with wide-spreading tops. Their black hats of felt were low in the crown, with wide brims which were looped up, with rosettes or not at the fancy of the wearer. A short sword was suspended in a sash drawn over the right shoulder and passing under the left arm, but otherwise the Hollanders were without weapons. Opposed to these stern, warlike men were the unkempt,

long-haired savages, clad in deerskins or waist belts of woven grass. Between the two stood a great sea chest with the lid open, revealing therein ribbons, beads, buttons, gayly embroidered coats, and similar articles, which were taken out one by one and shown the delighted savages, who were only too glad to give their island in



Purchase of Manhattan Island.

exchange for the glittering baubles. We can hardly believe that the ground on which our opulent city now stands was first bought for goods worth twenty-four dollars of our money.

In the midst of savage and fief Minit now set up his orderly government. It was unique in many respects, quite different from that of the New England colonies on the east, who lived under charters granted by the King of England and had their own legislature, which, being composed of men elected by themselves, acted as a check on the royal governor. The director, himself the servant of the company, enjoyed absolute power, except that he could not inflict the death penalty. The

people had also the right of appeal to the home chamber, and from its decision to the States-General. An advisory council of five of the wisest men of the colony was also to be appointed by the governor, to whose advice he was to give due weight. There were but two other officers of the colony, the secretary of the council and the schout fiscal, the latter as great a figure in the early history of Manhattan as the director himself; for he was State's attorney, sheriff, constable, and tax collector, and beadle and tithingman on Sundays. He began the Lord's day by preceding the members of the council to church, and during divine service patrolled the streets to see that no tapster profaned the



New Amsterdam.

day by selling schnapps, and no negro slave or Indian by gaming.

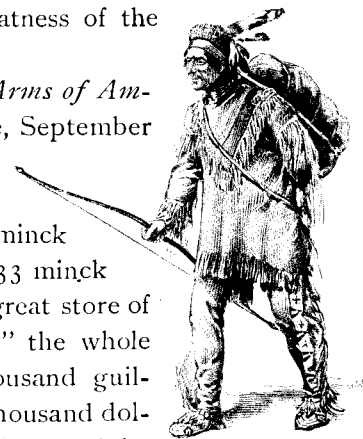
The people in general were mere fiefs, or servants, of the company. They could not own land; they could not trade with the Indians or among themselves; they

could make nothing, not even what they wore or consumed, these privileges being reserved for the company. After some thirty small cabins had been built along the East River, Minuit and his engineer, Kryn Fredericke, built a fort on a slight elevation near where Broadway now enters the Battery, and called it Fort Amsterdam. Then the busy delvers opened quarries in the neighboring crags, and built of the "Manhattan stone" found there a warehouse for the company's stores and other property. They do not seem to have had the tools for building a windmill after the fashion of their fathers, and so built a horse mill for grinding grain. For a church they fitted up the loft of the horse mill. Minister they had none, but the company had sent over two zeikentroosters, or "consolers of the sick" (what we would call lay readers), who read to them from the Bible on Sundays. But in two years a regularly ordained minister, the Rev. Jonas Michaelis, arrived, and the little colony was complete. It had taken eighteen years to found the settlement.

Minuit next turned his attention to trading with the Indians, and sent a little fleet, composed of a sloop, the ship's jolly-boat, and canoes, up the Hudson into every bay and creek where an Indian lodge could be seen, exchanging axes, knives, beads, and gay fabrics for furs and wampum, and inviting the savages to come down to the fort and trade with their white brothers. Many came, and soon tall, gaunt savages in skins or blankets, laden with bales of fur, venison, turkeys, wild fowl, and other game, became familiar objects in the streets of New Amsterdam; for so Minuit had named his infant

settlement. Very soon about the company's warehouse there was a great bustle of trade indeed, earnest of the forthcoming greatness of the port.

When the good ship *Arms of Amsterdam* sailed for home, September 23, 1626, she bore "7,246 beaver skins, 178½ otter skins, 675 otter skins, 48 minck skins, 36 wild-cat skins, 33 minck skins, 34 rat skins, and great store of oak and hickory timber," the whole valued at forty-five thousand guilders, or some nineteen thousand dollars. She also took specimens of the "summer grain" the colonists had just harvested, viz., rye, oats, barley, wheat, beans, flax, buckwheat, and canary seed. She carried, too, news of the birth of Sarah Rapalje, the "first-born Christian daughter" in New Netherland, born June 9, 1625.



Minuit knew that the English had settled on Massachusetts Bay, and he soon sent letters to Governor Bradford at Plymouth, proposing trade. The governor replied very courteously, saying that at present they had need of nothing, but that in the future they might, "if the rates were reasonable." At the same time he gently intimated that the Dutch were on English soil unlawfully; for England claimed the whole country between New England and Virginia west to the Pacific by virtue of the earlier discoveries of her sea captains, Cabot, John Smith, and others. On a receipt of this

Minuit sent his beloved secretary, Isaac de Rasières, in the bark *Nassau*, with many presents, who came to Plymouth, was well received by Governor Bradford, and spent many days in the village, being treated "with courtesy and rare good will" by the Pilgrims, and laying the foundation for a flourishing trade between the two colonies.

New Amsterdam prospered, however, without English trade. Six bouweries, or farms, were opened by the company in the open meadows along the East River, and stocked with sheep, cattle, hogs, and goats, while additional colonists were constantly arriving from the fatherland. In 1628 there were two hundred and seventy inhabitants. By 1629 the exports had risen to one hundred and thirty thousand guilders, and the imports to one hundred and thirteen thousand (about \$45,200). But neither this progress nor the promise of future revenues satisfied the directors at home, and after some thought they hit upon a plan which promised larger and quicker returns. Among their stockholders were many wealthy merchants who, they thought, would prize a title and an estate. To each of them the directors said in effect: "If you will at your own expense establish a colony in our territory of New Netherland we will grant you these privileges: a title, that of patroon, or feudal chief; an estate, stretching for sixteen miles along one bank of the river, or for eight along both banks, and extending inland as far as you can explore; exempt you and your people from taxation for ten years; grant you free trade, except in furs, which we reserve for ourselves, and full property rights; pro-

tect you from enemies, and supply you with servants. You shall forever possess and enjoy these lands, with the fruits, rights, minerals, rivers, and fountains, the fishing and fowling and grinding, the supreme authority and jurisdiction; and if you found cities, you shall have authority to establish for them officers and magistrates. In return you must agree to satisfy the Indians for the land taken; to plant a colony of at least fifty souls above fifteen years of age within four years; to provide a minister and schoolmaster for the colony as soon as possible, and until that is done a comforter of the sick. You may take up the lands anywhere except on Manhattan Island, which we reserve for ourselves."

Several directors and others accepted these terms, and thus came into being those great feudal manors and patroonships along the Hudson, which after the Revolution caused much trouble and discord, because in conflict with the spirit of the age. At the time they were given, however, they wrought both good and evil: good because they provided schools and churches, settled men in strong, well-ordered villages, and satisfied the Indian for his lands; bad in that they introduced human slavery, monopoly of land, and aristocratic privilege.

The first great patroonship created by this act was that of Rensselaerwyck, founded in 1630 by Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, a pearl merchant of Amsterdam and a director. By successive purchases of the Indians he became master of a territory twenty-four miles long by forty-eight wide, of an estimated area of seven hundred thousand acres. Later it made two counties, Albany and Rensselaer, and part of another, Columbia. Michael de

Pauw, another director, finding the best lands on the Hudson taken, purchased in June, 1630, the territory called Hoboken-Hacking, across the Hudson from New Amsterdam, and the next month Staten Island and the country south of his first purchase, now known as Jersey City. But these purchases, which included the more desirable of the company's lands, aroused the jealousy of the other directors who had secured none, and to appease them four others were admitted to a share in Rensselaerwyck. Settlers, horses, and cattle were soon sent to the latter, and in a few years it was a flourishing village. Pauw founded on his grant a village which he called the "Commune," and which no doubt gave its name to the later Communipaw.

But the company very soon found that the patroons were more intent on trading with the Indians than on clearing and cultivating their lands, and especially that they were buying and selling furs, which trade had been reserved as the exclusive right of the company, and a bitter quarrel arose over the matter which greatly hindered the growth of the colony. So violent did it become that it was carried to their High Mightinesses the States-General, who passed laws restricting the privileges of the patroons. Minuit had ratified the patroons' grants, and, it was charged, had in other ways favored them at the expense of the company, and this, with some minor charges of extravagance, led to his recall. He sailed for Holland in the ship *Veendracht*, in the spring of 1632. He had governed the infant settlement for six years, in general, it must be admitted, with wisdom, sagacity, and prudence.

III. WOUTER VAN TWILLER.

AND now the directors sat in their great oak-paneled chamber in Amsterdam to choose a new governor. After much debate they fixed on Wouter Van Twiller as the man. You may have read in Diedrich Knickerbocker's "History of New York" that author's famous description of him. "He was exactly five feet six inches in height and six feet five inches in circumference. His head was a perfect sphere, and of such stupendous dimensions that Dame Nature, with all her sex's ingenuity, would have been puzzled to construct a neck capable of supporting it; wherefore she wisely declined the attempt, and settled it firmly on the top of his backbone just between the shoulders. His body was oblong and particularly capacious at bottom. His legs were short, but sturdy in proportion to the weight they had to sustain; so that, when erect, he had not a little the appearance of a beer barrel on skids."

But, burlesque aside, Van Twiller was a grotesque figure, a mountain of flesh, slow and narrow of mind, with a petty spirit, and a burgomaster's fondness for good dinners and sound wine. He owed his selection to the powerful patroon Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, whose niece he had married, and who desired for governor a person attached to his interests.