

TWO MANHATTAN LAND PAPERS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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When in 1941 Dr. Paltsits retired from his position as chief of the American History Division in the New York Public Library, those interested in American historical scholarship might have assumed that a great career had ended. Indeed, such would have been true of most men, but for this devoted scholar the relief from regular employment merely served as an opportunity for further research and writing. The two documents which are described in this paper were presented to the Rutgers University Library by Dr. Paltsits, who holds the degree of Doctor of Letters, honoris causa, from Rutgers.

RECENTLY acquired by the Library are two land documents relating to Rutger Jacobsen, progenitor of the Rutgers family of New Netherland and New York. Since Rutger was a collateral ancestor, so to speak, of Rutgers University, a short account of him and of the two papers in which his name appears may be of some interest.

Rutger Jacobsen of Schoenderwoerdts embarked from the Texel, Holland, on October 1, 1636, in the vessel *Rensselaerswyck*, Jan Tiebkens, schipper, bound for Fort Orange (now Albany), in New Netherland, in the service of the first Patroon, Kiliaen van Rensselaer. His native heath, Schoenderwoerdts, was "a pretty Dutch village, two miles from Vianen, where Van Rensselaer had a country seat."¹

At Rensselaerswyck "Rutger became a man of considerable repute and wealth." He married in June, 1646, in New Amsterdam, Trijntje (Catharine) Jansse van Breestede. Three years later he became a brewer in Rensselaerswyck. In 1654 his brewery was on what is now Beaver Street. He was also a shipper of beaver skins, and owned a sloop on the river. He speculated in building lots in the village of Fort Orange and in farming land nearby. By 1661 he owned a share in Mohicander's Island.

His name, Rutger Jacobsen, means that his given name was

¹ These and other data about him are garnered from Ernest H. Crosby, "The Rutgers Family of New York," *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, Vol. 17 (April, 1886), pp. 82-93.

Rutger and that he was the son of Jacob. There was then no patronymic. That came from his son Harman Rutgers (or Rutgersen); that patronymic is derived from then on. But there were some lines that adopted as a patronymic the form "van Woerdt," a contraction of the village name "van Schoenderwoerdt," the place of origin of Rutger Jacobsen. He, the progenitor, remained in Rensselaerswyck, where he died in 1665, survived by a wife and three children, namely: Margaret, who was married to Jan Jansen Bleecker, the ancestor of the Bleecker family; Engeltje is said to have been married to Melgert Abrahamsen van Deusen; and an only son, Harman, above named, who created the patronymic of Rutgers. This son was also a brewer and had New Amsterdam interests.

The first of the two instruments herein described is written in Dutch. The second is a confirmation of the first by the new English governor. We shall treat them separately.

I

The first document is concerned with land on Manhattan Island in the City of New Amsterdam lying on Hoogh Straet (High Street). In it Rutger Jacobsen appears before Schepen, and makes declaration recorded in this instrument, that he, a resident of Fort Orange (now Albany), had a transport (conveyance) dated 4 October 1649, and written consent of Domine Joannes Megapolensis of date 12 November 1661, to Sieur Johannes Withart, burger here, *etc.* for land lying on the north of the Hoogh Straet, beside the residence of Sieur Isaack Bedloo, surveyed by Jacques Cortelyou.²

The Schepen named in the instrument, before whom Rutger Jacobsen deposed, are Timothy Gabry and Joannes van Brugh, and reference is made to the attaching of the seal thereto, which red wax seal with the arms of New Amsterdam is perfectly preserved in an excellent impression, and is very rare in such condition. The instrument is in the handwriting of Johannes Nevius, as secretary of the City of New Amsterdam.

Joannes Nevius (1627-1672), married Adriaentje (Bleijck) Jans. He came to America about 1650, became a member of the court of

² The place of this instrument in the history of land titles of New Amsterdam can be seen in I. N. P. Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, New York, 1915, II, 302-3, nos. 18 and 19.

Burgomasters, and from 1657 to 1665 was secretary of the City. He was an intelligent man and active in public affairs. He was also the *first* ferryman of the ferry between New Amsterdam and Breuckelen (the Brooklyn ferry). The original surname of his Holland ancestors was Neef, a family name above the commoners, which had a coat-of-arms. He used a Latinized form Nevius, as was then common for a Sieur or Yonkheer. He was the founder of the family in America. His descendants now use as a patronymic Nevius, Neafie, and other forms.³

Jacques Cortelyou, mentioned in the instruments as the surveyor of the land involved, was the ancestor of the Cortelyou family, and one of the most distinguished men of all New Netherland. He made the first detailed street survey of New Amsterdam in 1660, and his plan is reproduced, and interpreted by me, in Stokes's *Iconography*. The neighboring residence mentioned in this instrument, of Sieur Isaack Bedloo, is a name perpetuated among us as the owner then of Bedlows Island (Love Island) in our New York harbor. So that in this instrument there are involved the names of the founders of the Rutgers, Nevius, and Cortelyou families, who have left a progeny among whom were philanthropists, statesmen, and otherwise men of mark.

II

The second document is a confirmation of the land situated on the north part of High Street, which Rutger Jacobsen had possessed and conveyed to Johannes Withart on September 12, 1661, and is by this instrument from Governor Francis Lovelace made secure for Withart, his heirs and assigns forever. Such confirmations by the English governors were required and were made possible by the surrender provisions of New Netherland in 1664, under the authority received from the Duke of York, Proprietor of the Province of New York.

A companion piece of the Nevius document of 1661, this confirmation was executed at Fort James (formerly called "Fort van Nieuw Amsterdam") on May 14, 1670. It was written by the clerk of the province and is signed in the bold full signature of the governor,

³ See A. Van Doren Honeyman, *Joannes Nevius . . . and His Descendants*, Plainfield, N.J., 1900.

Francis Lovelace.⁴ The attest by Matthias Nicolls, as provincial secretary is also interesting. He was the ancestor of the family that now spells the name Nichols. The attached paper seal is intact. It is the first seal that was used on English instruments in New York, and is often missing now from these old papers.

⁴ See his biography in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, written by V. H. Paltsits, who as State Historian of New York has also edited the records of Lovelace, *Minutes of the Executive Council of the Province of New York: Administration of Francis Lovelace, 1668-1673*, Albany, 1910.

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of his Ma^{ties} Hon^{ble} Privy Councill & Govern^{or} Gen^l under his Royall Highnesse James Duke of Yorke & Albany &c. Of all his Territories in America, Do all to whom these presents shall come sendeth greeting, Whereas there is a certaine house & Lott of ground lying on the North parts of the High Street, now in the tenure or occupation of Nicolas Bayard, having on the West a certaine Alley, and on the East the house & Thomas Wandall, Conteyning on the South East side forty foot, on the North East side & forty foot wood measure, being in length on both sides one hundred and eighty foot, w^{ch} said house & Lott of ground was on the Twelfth day of September 1661 transported & made over unto Johannes Wittart, by Rutger Jacobsen who had bought the same at a publique Enterprize Now for a Confirmation unto the said Johannes Wittart in his possession & enjoyment of the premises, KNOW YE that by vertue of the full power & Authority unto me given by his Royall Highnesse, I HAVE surveyed, Confirmed, & granted, and by these presents doe Ratifye, Confirm, & grant, unto the said Johannes Wittart his heires & Assignes, the afore recited house Lott of ground & premises, w^{ch} all & singular their appurtenances, to have & to hold the said house Lott of ground & premises, unto the said Johannes Wittart his heires & Assignes, to the proper use & behoofe of the said Johannes Wittart, his heires and Assignes for ever; Rendering & payinge such duties & Acknowledgments, as now are or hereafter shall be Constituted & Established by the Lawes of this Governmt^{nt} and the obedience of his Royall Highnesse his heires & Successors, GIVEN und^{er} my hand & sealed with the Seale of the Province at Fort James in New Yorke this 14th day of May in the 22th yeere of his Ma^{ties} Raigue Annoq^{ue} Domini 1670.

Recorded by ord^{er} of the Govern^{or}.
M^{artin} Newell. Secr.

Francis Louelace