

Jan Joosten and Jan Gysbertsen Van Meteren

The name of Van Meteren is a notable one in the annals of the Netherland people. One of the best known members of this family to Americans is the famous historian Emanuel Van Meteren, who was born at Antwerp in 1535. In one of his works he gave an account of Hudson's voyage of discovery in the Half Moon, which account was derived from other sources than Juet's Journal, and is embodied in Dr. Jameson's "Narratives of New Netherland."

Half a century elapsed before the name of Van Meteren is again mentioned in connection with American affairs, this time however in the persons of New Netherland colonists, whose interest in the new world may have been aroused by reading their gifted namesake's account.

On August 31, 1662, the ship Vos (Fox) Captain Jacob Jansen Huys had among its many passengers Jan Joosten, (who probably was returning to New Netherland) his wife and five children, respectively fifteen, twelve, nine, six and two and a half years old. The family's original home was the Thielerswaard (district near the city of Thiel) in the province of Gelderland.

Upon their arrival, the family immediately went to Wildwyck, in the Esopus, where they seem to have lived previously, for in 1661 Jan Joosten, in company with Allard Heymans Roosa and Jan Gerritsen, had been appointed a committee to superintend the enclosing of the new village of Nieuw Dorp (Hurley) in the present County of Ulster.

Jan Joosten, who usually signed himself Jan Joosten Van Meteren, took up fanning and speedily became prominent. He was appointed referee in a law suit in 1665, elected schepen (magistrate) in the same year, a deacon in 1667, and re-elected a schepen in 1668. During his term of office the then historic name of Wildwyck was, on September 25, 1669, changed to Kingston by the English and Jan Joosten, no more than his fellow magistrates, was consulted about the change.

Wildwyck's surgeon, Gysberl Van Imbroch, (Van Emburgh) had died on August 29, 1665. Besides being the local physician and pharmacist, he kept a general store, and the inventory of his estate includes a wide variety of objects, from high priced books down to the commonest necessities of life. On September 2, William Beeckman, Jan Willemsen Hoochteylingh (Hotaling, Houghtaling), and Jan Joosten had taken an inventory of the property which included a copy of the celebrated work by Emanuel Van Meteren, alluded to before.

At the sale on September 9, following, Jan Joosten was a generous buyer, his purchases amounting to nearly a hundred guilders. Two of his purchases were the Beehive, by the famous Marnix, Lord of St. Aldegonde, and the Chronicles of the Kings of England (in Dutch). This shows the bent of the man's mind, and proves that the New Netherlanders were not the ignorant boors that the English of this and later periods were fond of characterizing the pioneers and founders of New Netherland and their descendants — simply because they did not understand the language of the usurpers,— a practice continued by the English of the present day in regard to the people of South Africa.

During the troubles at Wildwyck in 1667, originating from the outrageous conduct of the English garrison there, Jan Joosten took no sides, but with Willem Beeckman, Roelof Swartwout, Thomas Chambers and Evert Pels, attempted the role of mediator and of dissuading the excited inhabitants from committing any rash act, which would only have resulted in the destruction of their lives and property either then or later.

At the rebuilding of New Dorp (Hurley), Jan Joosten appears to have removed there, and through an adjustment of the boundaries between Hurley and Marbletown on March 30, 1669 (1670?) was, with seven of his fellow citizens, annexed to the latter place. When, after the Dutch reconquest, Colve became Governor of New Netherland, Jan Joosten and Jan Broersen Decker, on October 6, 1673, were appointed magistrates of Marbletown, or Marbeldorp, as then named, in place of the appointees of the former English government.

When, on March 7, 1681, Wessel Ten Broeck and his wife, Maria Ten Eyck, made a joint will, it was witnessed by Tierck Claessen De Witt and Jan Joosten, who, at the time was a justice. A few months later, on December 16, 1681, Jan Joosten and his wife, Maycken Hendricks, also made a joint will, which was witnessed by Benjamin Provoost and Severyen Ten Hout. In this will two sons, Joost and Gysbert, are named, and from the contents of the document it is evident that most of the real estate was located at Marbletown and a smaller quantity at Wassemaker's land, all in the County of Ulster. The probate of this will at Burlington, NJ, on June 13, 1706, shows that Jan Joosten survived his wife.

It would seem that Gysbert had no sons, or he may have gone early to Southern New Jersey, and there blazed the path for his father, his brother Joost, or the latter's children, himself leaving hardly any trace in the Esopus country.

On September 14, 1664, Sara, the daughter of Louis Du Bois and Catherine Blanchan, was baptised at Wildwyck. A little more than eighteen years later, on December 12, 1682, she married, at Xew Paltz, Joost Jansen Van Meteren, who was then living with his parents at Marbletown. The couple had at least four children, two girls and two boys, the oldest of whom, Tan, was baptised on October 14, 1683, and the youngest, Hendrick, on September 1, 1695. It is quite probable that there was another son, Isaac Van Meteren, who, on June 9, 1710, qualified as administrator of the estate of Hendrick Mulliner of Salem County, NJ, and whose bondsmen were John and Henry Van Metere.

Prominent as he was in the Esopus section of the colony of New York, it would appear that Jan Joosten Van Meteren did not consider the prospects here as promising as in the more southern pan of the country, and at an advanced age joined in the migration southward by other New York families.

With the evident exception of his son Joost, who, on May 27, 1697, had surveyed for him "a tract of stoney woodland, lying within the bounds of Marbletown, in Ulster County," it would appear that Jan Joosten Van Meteren moved with his family to Salem County, in the Colony of New Jersey, where land was to be acquired on more advantageous terms. Here his grandsons, Jan Hendrick and Isaac Van Meteren first bought 3000 acres of land, which subsequently grew into 6000 acres, so that the Van Meterens were early among the largest property owners and most prominent residents of southern New Jersey.

Jan Joosten Van Metcren had died before June 13, 1706, when he left a personal estate valued at £235.14, including six Negro slaves, a man, a woman and four children, valued together at £145. The inventory had been made by John Van Nest and Hendrick Reinersen, and was sworn to by John Wan Mater at Burlington, NJ. The document recording these transactions is in Dutch, showing that the tongue of New Netherland at the time was still vigorous in its southern bounds.

From here this branch of the Van Meteren family, during colonial times, migrated westward into Pennsylvania, northward into Genesee County, NY, and southward into Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky and other southern colonies. Its members generally maintained the prestige gained for it by its founders, and it is stated that women of this southern branch during colonial times married into noble English families, thus attesting to its wealth and standing.

On September 26, 1687, among those who took the oath of allegiance at New Utrecht to James II of England, was Kreyn Janse Van Meteren, who at the time was stated to have been in the country twenty four years. This would fix the date of his arrival in 1663. He had come over as a child with his father, Jan Gysbertsen Van Meteren, who hailed from Bommel, in the province of Gelderland. From the fact that Jan Joosten Meteren had a son Gysbert, it may be inferred that Jan Gysbertsen and Jan Joosten were cousins, the sons of two brothers, Gysbert and Joost.

Unlike Jan Joosten, his probable cousin Jan Gysbertsen settled at New Utrecht on Long Island, where he engaged in farming. Jan Gysbertsen did not appear prominently in the public eye until after the reconquest of New Netherland by the Dutch Admirals Evertsen and Binckes in August 1673.

In the fall of the same year Schepen Jan Thomassen Van Dyke had died and the Court of New Utrecht proposed as his successor Jan Gysbertsen. Governor Colve, on November 16, 1673, appointed him, as is shown by the following extract from the record: "The Governor has from the nomination made by the Magistrates of the town of Utrecht selected Jan Gysbertse Van Meteren as magistrate in the place of Jan Thomassen, now lately deceased."

According to Bergen's "*Early Settlers of Kings County*," Jan Gysbertsen was a deacon of the Dutch Church at New Utrecht, in 1683. According to the same authority, he was on the assessment rolls of the same place in 1675, 1676 and 1683, and in the census of 1698, but the writer of the present article has failed to find his name there after 1675. This would indicate that he had either removed or died shortly after 1675, or disposed of his interests.

It would appear that he had only one son. Kreyn Jansen, though it is not improbable that he had an older one, Gysbert, who may have died before reaching his majority, or have removed to another part of the country, possibly discarding the family name, or becoming known simply as Gysbert Jansen.

Kreyn or Cryn Jansen Van Meteren came into prominence at about the same time as his father. On March 28, 1674, the people of New Utrecht had elected him and Hendrick Mattysen Smack their

delegates to the General Assembly convened at New Orange (formerly New Amsterdam) by Governor Colve, to confer with him concerning the welfare of the country. According to Bergen, Cryn Jansen was a member of the Dutch Church at New Utrecht in 1677, and a deacon in 1699. According to the same authority, He was on Dongan's Patent to new Utrecht in 1686, and was assessed for forty-six acres of land in 1701.

In 1675 the value of his taxable property, consisting of three horses and twenty four morgens (about forty eight acres) of land, amounted to one hundred and thirteen pounds sterling. As the value of his horses is given as sixty-five pounds, this would fix the price of a horse in those days at about a hundred dollars, and the value of an acre of farming land, in settled communities, at about five dollars. As buildings appear to have been exempt from taxation, the value of his dwelling, barns and other structures is not mentioned in the list.

Just seven years later his taxable property in New Utrecht consisted of forty acres of land, two horses and four cows, while at the census taken about 1698 his family included himself, his wife and four children.

The migrating spirit, so strong among New Netherland's pioneers, powerfully affected Long Island's agricultural population near the close of the seventeenth century. To the south of them, in New Jersey, there were hundreds of thousands of acres of the best farming lands, almost for the asking, awaiting the axe of the woodsman, to be followed by the plow of the husbandman. Thither they wended their way, mostly older sons, but there were also among them heads of large families, for whom the wilderness had no terrors.

Among these was Creyn Jansen Van Meteren, who, notwithstanding his prominent position in New Utrecht — which, as a hoy he had assisted in rendering habitable, — evidently longed for fresh wildernesses to subdue. Though no longer a young man at the time of his second migration, Creyn Jansen, early in the eighteenth century, disposed of his New Utrecht interests and, with scores of other Kings County people, moved into that portion of central New Jersey which later became known as Monmouth County. Here, with his sturdy family of five boys and three girls, he gradually cleared and made tillable the broad acres, first purchased and later added to.

Here, during colonial times and the earlier years of the republic, the Van Meteren family grew in influence and numbers, being one of the most powerful factors in the development of Monmouth County. In fact, it is difficult to enumerate a single phase of activity — religious, educational, political, social, agricultural, industrial, commercial — in which one or more Van Meterens were not more or less prominently interested. The history of Monmouth County, as shown in Beekman's "Early Settlers of Monmouth County," is to a great extent interwoven with the history of the Van Meterens.

Their activity extended even into the broader field of the higher education, and one of their number, Jan Van Meteren, was among the earliest trustees for Queens (now Rutgers) college at New Brunswick, having been appointed as such on April 4, 1767.

On April 26, 1719, Kryn Jansen Van Meteren, who was then living at Middletown, Monmouth Comity, N. J., made his last will. In it he mentioned his wife, Neeltye, (Van Cleef) and their children Jan, Yda, Engeltye, Cornelia, Ghisbert, Benjamin, Sirynus (Quiryusus) and Joseph, appointing his brothers-in-law, Benjamin Van Cleve and Philip Folcoertson, executors. Where, as a rule, two subscribing witnesses are judged sufficient, this will is subscribed to by not less than five, viz.: Jacobus Swett, Hendrick Smock, John, Thomas and William Lawrence.

Kryn Jansen had passed away on March 21, 1720, when the will was proved, and on May 7 following an inventory was taken of the personal estate, whose value amounted to nearly a thousand dollars, including a large bible and four other books, whose combined value was set down at \$22.50.

Benjamin, born in 1702, through his son Cyreneus, his grandson Peter, his great grandson John and his great great grandson George W. was the first native born American ancestor of Dr George G. Van Mater, of Brooklyn, NY, to whose successful treatment as an oculist and devoted interest as a physician, the writer of this article pays a grateful tribute.

After the English usurpation had forced upon the people of New Netherland an alien tongue, most New Netherland names underwent notable changes, and that of Van Meteren was no exception. Van Metre, Van Metere, Van Meter, Vanmeter, Van Mater, Van Mather, Van Matre, Van Matere, Vanmarter, Van Martyr are some of the modifications. Others, having dropped the Van, simply became known as Mater or even Mather, unrecognizable remnants of the glorious old name of Van Meteren.