

BOOK REVIEWS

*J*aap Jacobs. *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007. Pp. xi, 332. Maps, notes, glossary, index, bibliography. Paper, \$26.95.)

Coinciding with the four-hundredth anniversary of Henry Hudson's first voyage to North America in 1609, Jaap Jacobs's release *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* provides one of the most comprehensive accounts of the colony published to date. Building upon the previous translations of Charles Gehring's work with the New Netherland Project, Jacobs's own meticulous analysis of practically every primary and secondary source pertaining to the Dutch colony offers an illuminating look into the Dutch presence in early America.

After reports described the Hudson Valley as "A Blessed Country, Where Milk and Honey Flow," profit-hungry merchants in the Dutch Republic sailed west and established trade with the local Native Americans. Jacobs examines how early Dutch

companies looked to exploit the region for profit in the fur trade, not unlike their regional rivals the English, French, and later the Swedes. Yet it would be the formation and development of the Dutch West Indies Company (WIC) in 1621 that would define the uniqueness of the colony and steer the evolution of New Netherland until its capture by the English in 1664.

The ability to extract profit from its overseas investment drove the company into two separate and competing factions almost from the start. Jacobs's thesis centers upon how some of WIC's initial directors doubted the ability of the colony to produce any long-term financial gains for its investors. Known as the trade faction, this group concluded that it would be best to invest sparingly into the colony, focusing instead on the fur trade to maximize short-term profits. The opposing group, known as the colonization faction, argued that while it would indeed require some major advances in specie to establish a settlement, once the colony became self-sufficient in the production of agricultural goods, investments would decrease and profits increase. Not surprisingly, the author argues that the WIC's initial model for colonization was much closer to the profit motive of Jamestown than it was to the New Plymouth model.

In contrast to England and the founding of the Plymouth Colony, religious persecution was rarely a motive to move to New Netherland, according to Jacobs. However, he argues that the religious tolerance of the Dutch colony toward churches other than that of the Reformed has been somewhat overstated by historians. One would indeed have freedom of conscience as long as there was no public display or outright challenge to the Reformed Church.

The geographic origin of the colonists was diverse and there was a clear connection between their stated occupations and their areas of origin. Farmers came from the less-prosperous eastern provinces of the Dutch Republic, laborers from Amsterdam's international labor market, and major merchants from Amsterdam and Haarlem. Contracted soldiers who were employed by the WIC originated mostly from the German states (not unlike the colony of New Sweden), while seafarers and sailors were often recruited from Scandinavia. New Netherlands lacked large numbers of both enslaved and free Africans as it differed greatly from the plantation colonies established in Maryland and Virginia. However, Jacobs states that in 1664, with the arrival of the ship *Gideon* and 291 slaves, the colony's numbers of both free and enslaved Africans doubled in size and made up between 6 and 8 percent of the total population (55). While there was clearly geographic and cultural diversity in New Netherland, "a motley collection of various countries" according to one contemporary account, their common denominator was that

they were all united under Dutch colonial rule and cultural connection to the patria (61).

When the Peace of Breda halted the Second Anglo-Dutch War in 1667, it did so at the expense of the colonists in New Netherlands. As Jacobs points out, the decision is indeed understandable from the viewpoint of the States General back in Amsterdam. New Netherland was a small, underpopulated island in a sea of ever-growing English colonies, particularly as the seventeenth century marched on. It would be extremely vulnerable in the face of its increasingly aggressive and expansion-minded neighbors. By 1664, Jacobs contends, New Netherland no longer fit within the Dutch Atlantic economy, as the Dutch were more concerned with their shipping and trade empires than colonization schemes in North America. It simply became an expendable pawn in the game of empires.

Jacobs's *The Colony of New Netherland* offers a richly detailed and exhaustive look into the Dutch colonial experience in North America, a subject until recently neglected by early American scholars. This is an illuminating and highly readable work. It might overwhelm nonspecialists with its level of detail and analysis, but it nonetheless fills an important niche in the history of the Atlantic World.

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John Smolenski. *Friends and Strangers: The Making of a Creole Culture in Colonial Pennsylvania*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. Pp. viii, 401. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth, \$45.00.)

Pennsylvanians have prided themselves on the story of their founding almost since the founding itself. The story of William Penn's great experiment of religious freedom and harmonious relations with the native inhabitants is an often-told tale, recognizable by many, from grade schools to the ivory towers, and immortalized in paintings from the eighteenth century to videogames in the twenty-first. But is our creation story just that, a story, steeped in myth just as the wolf-raised Romulus? In *Friends and Strangers*, John Smolenski