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Coming to Terms with Early New Netherland - NY History: 1610-1614



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On July 30, 1613, Dutch trader Francoys Pelgroms wrote a letter to his wife, Barbara Sprangers, then staying with her mother in Prague:

...Further, dearest love, I cannot help telling you in this letter about the successful arrival of our ship, under master Adriaen Block and our nephew Jan Kint, for which God be praised. Both are in good health and made a good voyage, yes, a better voyage even than last year...

He writes again on August 20 of the same year

...Further, dearest love, I could only find an opportunity to send you this short letter, for which I can hardly find any time, because I am so hard at work sending Adriaen Block out again to the same place from where he returned. We shall now send two ships thither and obtained a charter, so that no one but us is allowed to sail there. Will you please keep this a secret so that no one will know and hear about it?

With this rush of emotion Pelgroms provides the first quickening heartbeats of a momentum that will build

over the coming months to a remarkable crescendo—an era of peace and stability that will lay the foundation for the New Netherland colony and all that came after.

Coming to terms with early New Netherland history means examining how traders like Adriaen Block, Hendrick Christiaensen and Jacob “Jacques” Eelckens found their way to America’s upper Hudson River and worked with the local Mohawks and Mohicans to reach an agreement that would rock the world.

Exactly how all this came about in such a short time deserves a closer look, using every tool available: primary sources, the archaeological record, native oral history—as well as careful deduction.

These words from Mohawk oral history, set down in 1691, give a sense of the native’s commitment to the 1613 Guswenta (Two Row Wampum Belt) treaty:

We have been informed by our Forefathers that in former times a Ship

arrived here in this Country which was a matter of great admiration to us, especially our desire was to know what was in her Belly. In that Ship were Christians, amongst the rest one Jacques with whom we made a Covenant of friendship, which covenant hath since been tied together with a chaine and always ever since kept inviolable.

The decade of stability secured by the agreement consolidate not only the Dutch colony but the Haudenosaunee Confederacy as well, profoundly reshaping the balance of power in North America for centuries to come.

Available both online and in printed form, *Coming to Terms with Early New Netherland-NY History: 1610-1614* will come out in the fall of 2013.

