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Although a carpenter and mason by trade, Cornelis now became like many others who swore allegiance to the new land proprietors--a farmer, bound to the soil and bound by his contract for a specified time. (At the end of harvest time the farmers were obliged to pay a percentage of their crops and livestock to the landlord, or Patroon, grind their wheat, if they raised any, in his mill and purchase supplies from his store.) Cornelis seems to have accepted well the terms of his contract,¹ however, and it appears not to have restricted his freedom; since he spent most of his time between 1643 and 1648 down the river at Manhattan to the extent that the Secretary of Rensselaerswyck, Antoni de Hooges, concerned about his absence, urged him to ". . . come up the river to see how the harvest proceeds," and intimated that he might at least come to the Colony once a year to look after his farm. Cornelis appears to have operated the same farm from the first. Located some distance north of Fifth Creek (now Patroon Creek), adjoining the farm called "de Vlackte," (later Schuyler Flats), in Albany, "He seems to have worked on shares" this farm he was put in charge of until 1648.²

Albany, where Cornelis' farm was located, was first under the leadership of Cornelis May, who had in 1623 sailed up the Hudson and dropped passengers off on an island a little below the present site of Albany. The Dutch West India

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According to the Van Rensselaer Manuscript, he began his account on August 12, 1634 with the Colony of Rensselaerswyck, four months from the time he signed his contract.

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Van Rensselaer Manuscript, p. 809. From 1648 to 1652 his annual rental fee was f600, from 1652-1661 it was f500.

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Company, however, after its creation moved the post called "Fort Nassau" upstream and renamed it "Ft. Orange."¹

At Ft. Nassau as early as 1618, the natives had begun coming to the fort to exchange furs for Dutch cloth, nails, and other iron tools. When the new fort was built upriver, the natives continued coming to trade, and new settlers crowded around the Ft. Orange building to "horn in" on the lucrative trade, instead of settling on the east shore on lands which belonged to the Patroon, and on which he planned his colonists would settle. Although the West India Company, alone, claimed the exclusive right to trade for fur, the Patroon felt all furs brought within his boundaries belonged to him. The new colonists were thus trading doubly illegally for beaver and otter when they attempted to "horn in."²

It was not until 1640, six years after Cornelis arrived in New Netherland, that the Dutch charter of the company was changed to allow open trading, and even then a payment of tax was imposed on the furs. Later, about the time Cornelis first went to Manhattan, the Albany traders were commanding 20 beaver skins for only one Dutch musket.³

¹
Edmonds, p. 160. The word "Orange" had a special significance, because it referred to the Dutch characteristic of being on top--"Oranje boven," or "up with Orange," when translated. Wearing orange colors was a symbol of loyalty and integrity. The name Ft. Orange should never have been changed to the English "Albany," but remained a credit to the Dutch. (See p. 299 of a book compiled from papers read by various individuals before the Herkimer Co. Historical Society [New York, 1899].)

²
Edmonds, p. 156.

³
Edmonds, p. 156.

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After the settlement of Albany, small parties of Dutch traders began pushing beyond Mohican country into Iroquois lands. Up to this point Rensselaerswyck, as Kilisno's colony was known, and all Dutch holdings in the New World, had been bought from the Mohicans; but now the plucky Dutch looked beyond Albany and Mohican country into the "Westerling," or Mohawk country. The same year Cornelis arrived in New Netherland (1634), a Dutchman named Van den Bogaert was busy penetrating the Westerling country visiting Mohawk Indian villages, or "castles," as they were called. He observed that the houses, made and covered with the bark of trees and mostly flat at the top, were not only "full of corn, . . . in some more than 300 bushels . . .," but also full of fur--120 beaver skins were seen in one house alone.

Cornelis may have ventured into the Mohawk country after coming to Albany with a small Dutch exploring party, such as Bogaert's, or perhaps he went officially into the land of the Mohawks as a representative of the Patroon, or simply on his own as an independent trader. At any rate, one of the Mohawk castles visited by Bogaert in his travels in 1634, the village of Canagere, was to play a very important role in the life of Cornelis;

1

The Dutch never obtained any of their lands in the New World by conquest, only by purchase.

2

Codman Hislop, The Mohawk (New York, 1948), p. 53. This book is part of the Rivers of America series. (Bogaert saw hinges for doors, harrow irons, nails and iron loops in the Mohawk Castles, which were trade items the Mohawks had received for their furs.)

3

Cornelis, according to the Van Rensselaer Ms., was appointed "voorspraecke," by the Patroon, the Dutch equivalent of representative, along with Arent Van Curler and Pieter Cornelisz, until the coming of Van der Donck in 1641.

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for in Canajoharie Castle, ¹ Cornelis was to find and woo and win a half-French, half-Indian maiden of compelling grace and beauty, whose mother was a Mohawk Princess and whose father was a French trader, Jacques Hartell. From this union of a Dutch carpenter and an Indian Princess, named Alstock ² or Olstock, children were born, beginning with a son, Jacques, in 1640.

Cornelis spent considerable time between 1643 and 1648 at Manhattan, and apparently left Alstock at Canajoharie, since all four children were born there. As a result of his work for William Kieft, the director of the Dutch West India Company at Manhattan, Cornelis was granted a patent of land in the Catskills "in return for services rendered in bringing about general peace and in ransoming prisoners in the hands of the Indians." ³ This conveyance came the same year his last child, a daughter, Leah, was born (1646) at the Indian Castle.

His third child, also a girl, grew up in the Indian Castle, and was exposed at an early age to Christianity. Some of the Christians, among whom she went to trade, urged her to leave the Castle and go with them, where they would bring her up, "but her mother would not let her." ⁴

¹ William Maxwell Reid in The Mohawk Valley Its Legends and Its History (New York, 1901), says on page 6: "When Canajoharie Castle is spoken of it means the Indian Settlement in the town of Danube in Herkimer County and now known as Indian Castle." The Indian name was spelled "Can-a-jor-ha," and meant "the pot that washes itself," since the water appeared to boil as it flowed from a hole in the bed of Canajoharie Creek.

² Ruby Myrtle Fronk Hall, Robert Cole and Fronk Genealogy (privately printed, about 1970), p. 73. A copy of this record is on file at the LDS Genealogical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.

³ Van Rensselaer Ms., p. 809. Cornelis also owned land near Cohoes.

⁴ Reid, p. 155.

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Alstock was not in favor of her daughter, Hilletie, embracing the new religion and tried to dissuade her from accepting Christianity. Alstock's attitude in resisting was a general reflection of her own people's feeling toward what they considered an unwanted foreign influence, and an attempt by outsiders, not so much to open the natives' minds, as to make them conform to their ways. Zealous missionaries from their headquarters in New France had attempted to convert the Mohawks, so had the Dutch with their pastors (Dominies) at Ft. Orange.

Alstock's people also resisted the new religion because of their nomadic way of life. They wandered around a great deal, at least twice a year to and from their hunting ground; they had no fixed population; and if they were not pursuing the chase, they were pursuing war. In 1666, as a retaliation for hit and run raids in Canada, for example, five of their Indian Castles were burned by the French and their crops destroyed. All the Mohawk castles¹ had to be rebuilt and most were relocated.

The year the Mohawks negotiated a peace with the French, who had burned their castles, a young Indian girl, the daughter of a Mohawk chief, named "Tekawitha," befriended three Catholic Jesuit priests at Caughnawage. Ellen Walworth, who wrote a biography of Tekawitha, describes life in an Indian village. The daughters of Alstock and Cornelis, no doubt, shared in similar experiences and had the same busy life as Tekawitha in her Indian village. Young girls, for example, were required to help the other women build the bark houses within the tall stakes or palisades of the Indian Castle.

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Thomas Wood Clarke, The Bloody Mohawk, (New York, 1968), p. 72.

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To accomplish this, trees were planted in two rows firmly in the ground. When they had grown sufficiently tall, the tops of the saplings were bent across the intervening space and tied to form ribs. (These arched house ribs were supported and held in place by poles put in horizontally across the house near the top.) Then overlapping pieces of bark were tied down with poles to cover the exterior of the house, and loose pieces of bark were left to cover the hole in the roof, which served as a chimney, and also to cover the windows in case of rain. When the house was finished by the young girls and women, it became a shelter for more than one family; and since more than one family occupied a house, each member was assigned a certain seat. Fire alternated with spaces for family gatherings in the long house at meal time, and along the sides of the house were bunk beds, with robes of skin serving as bed clothes. Food of dried corn and smoked meat hung from the ceiling, and always in the corners were baskets of wampum waiting for the young girls¹ to string. Little bark dishes and wooden bowls served as eating utensils.

Like Tekawitha, who was struck with the affable manners and the regularity in prayer of the Jesuit priests, whom she befriended, and attended to in her Uncle's lodge, Hilletie Van Slyck was also impressed with those who spoke to her about Christ and felt "a great inclination and love in her heart"² for them. Her thoughts were alive with the new God--a God who could hear the

¹ Ellen Hardin Walworth, *Kateri Tekawitha*, (Buffalo, 1891), pp. 103-4.

² Reid, p. 155.

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whispered prayer of the priest or Dominie in her own lodge, who could speak to her inmost heart, a God who was everywhere and kind like the Mohawk God "Tharonyawagon," but not cruel like the Mohawk God "Aireskoi."

Alstock's resistance to Hillette's God now stood firmly in the way of a good mother-daughter relationship. "There came an open break between them," and Hillette left Canajoharie and "went to live in Albany with a woman who taught her to read and write." Soon after, Hillette was baptized into the Dutch Reformed Church and employed to assist the Dutch Dominie Lydius as a missionary among her mother's people in the Mohawk Valley. She also assisted in the translation of the Bible from the Dutch into the ¹ Mohawk language.

Described as "an estimable woman, "who made excellent use of her advantages,"² and who "by reason of . . . her familiarity with the [Iroquois] language . . . was for many years employed as the Provincial interpreter,"³ Hillette married Pieter Danielse Van Olinda;⁴ and her sister, Leah, married Class Williamse Van Coppernol, both of whom were among the original settlers of Schenectady. (After the death of Van Coppernol, Leah married a freeholder

¹ Hall, p. 74. Variant spellings for Hillette are "Illete" and "Hilletteje."

² Reid, p. 155.

³ Joel Henry Monroe, Schenectady--Ancient and Modern (Schenectady, 1941), pp. 39, 53.

⁴ Van Olinda, a tailor who worked at that trade in Albany, was one of the original 14 settlers of Schenectady, and one of the few who could write his own name on the petition. His house was on the south side of Union Street in Schenectady, a little west of Ferry Street. (See Monroe, p. 39.)

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named Jonathan Stevens, who erected for his new bride a home on his estate along the Mohawk River in 1693 called the "Ael Place," a home which was still standing in 1914.)¹ Leah, like Hilletie, served as a missionary to the Mohawks and also acted as an interpreter.² Both sisters received from the Mohawks valuable grants of land, among which was Willow Flat (Cow-willegen or Willegen Vlachte) below Ft. Jackson, which was divided between the two, subsequent to 1693.³ They also owned jointly an island in the Mohawk at Niskayuna (Nsarcane), an Indian Castle at a bend in the river about halfway between Schenectady and the Hudson. Hilletie came into possession of land above Cohoes Falls, when she was 23.⁴

The Dutch Dominies, such as Lydius whom Hilletie assisted, played an important role in the early history of New Netherland. One Dominie, for example, named John Megapolensis, signed a contract in Holland with Van

¹
Monroe, p. 252.

²
Jeptha Simms, History of Schoharie County (Albany, 1845), p. 54. Leah acted as interpreter on the occasion of the Indians conveying land in 1714 to Adam Vrooman on the west side of the Mohawk River above Weiser's Dorf called "Vrooman's Land."

³
Reid, p. 155.

⁴
Hall, p. 74. "The Cohoes Falls," says Reid, "must have appeared grand and beautiful, since the Mohawk River at the falls is more than 100 yards wide, and the fall itself nearly 70 feet perpendicular in addition to the turbulent rapids below." (page 49.)

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Rensselaerswyck for a six-year period in 1642 to become the official spiritual leader of the new colony. Hilletie's father, Cornelis, had also signed a contract in Holland with the Patroon; but he did not become, like Megapolensis, a spiritual leader, instead, he was appointed by the Patroon as a civic leader, or Voorspraecke, for the Colony.

The year before Cornelis received this appointment, a Frenchman named Jean Labate said in a deposition before Albany officials that he had been sent by the West India Company into the Seneca Country, as far as Jagaro, to put the company's mark up on trees to claim the land for the company. On this mission, he said, he obtained the release from the natives of French prisoners, among them five priests. Labate also said in this same deposition that he and "one Brier Cornelise who had an Indian Squae to his wife" were sent in 1665 by the English Governor Nicholls to take possession of the Five-Nations Territory for the English which the Dutch had previously claimed.²

Labate was 74 years old, when he made this deposition on July 2, 1688,³ telling how he lived at Ft. Orange, after coming to New Netherland, with the

¹
Brier Cornelis refers to the term "brother," which, because of their affection, the Indians called him. Often he was referred to as "Broer Cornelis" and occasionally as "Cornelis Teunisz, alias Broeder," according to the Van Rensselaer Manuscript.

²
Lawrence H. Leder, ed., The Livingston Indian Records (Gettysburg, Pa., 1956), pp. 144, 147.

³
Labate was brought by the Rensselaers to the Colony when Wouter Van Twiller was director of the Company and Jacob Plank was director of the Colony. "Anyone," he said, "who came out in ye Service of ye Rensselaers" were obliged to "swear that they were not to Trade with ye Indians."

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Commander, Bastiaen Croll, and what a lucrative fur trade Croll had with the natives from Albany to Buffalo (The Five Nations)¹. In one year alone, for example, Croll obtained 37,000 beaver for the company. William Kieft, the director-general of the company, who had granted land to Cornelis in 1646, was succeeded by Wouter Van Twiller; and he, in turn, was replaced by Peter Stuyvesant, who became the last Dutch ruler of New Netherland, surrendering the colony to the English in 1664.

Early in his term, Stuyvesant had been forced to send soldiers up the Hudson to reclaim land surrounding Ft. Orange, on which the tenants of the Patroon had flocked to settle, preferring the illegal fur trading on the west shore to farming on the Patroon's east shore. Even the Patroon's director had built a home on the west shore under the guns of the fort. Stuyvesant ordered the company's director imprisoned, but did not dare tear down his house, since the influence of Kiliaen Van Rensselaer was still great in Holland. Stuyvesant named the re-claimed area Beverwyck (Bever in Dutch means "Buttermilk," Wyck means "creek") and appointed three magistrates to hear all cases in civil and criminal law. The Patroon of Rensselaerswyck had his own court for the colony, but his subjects could appeal more costly judgments to Stuyvesant, the company's director and his council at Manhattan.² (Cornelis was appointed a member of the Court of Rensselaerswyck

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The Five Nations were only too glad to renew their treaty with the company each year at Ft. Orange; for it not only guaranteed the exchange of Dutch goods and firearms, but also afforded a promise of protection from the French.

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Edmonds, p. 179.

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in 1658 and again in 1660 and 1661.)¹

The last year that Cornelis served as a member of that Court, Arendt Van Curler appeared before Johanne La Montagne, Vice-director of the West India Co. at Ft. Orange, to ask for consent to purchase from the Mohawks the Great Flat (Groote Vlacte) of lowlands along the Mohawk River lying inland from Ft. Orange for "himself and some friends."² Cornelis had shared the office of Voorspraecche with Van Curler, and on September 23, 1650, had chosen to accompany him on an embassy to the Mohawks.³ When Van Curler, therefore, petitioned the Governor, Cornelis and his two sons joined in the transaction. Director Stuyvesant in Manhattan granted the petition, and the land was purchased from the Mohawks, the deed being executed at Ft. Orange July 27, 1661, in the presence of Cornelis' second son, Martin Maurice.⁴ The three Mohawk clans were represented in the land transaction by the sachems (chiefs) of the Turtle, Wolf and Bear castles. The gate or door to

¹
Van Rensselaer Manuscript, p. 809.

²
Monroe, p. 24.

³
Van Rensselaer Ms., p. 809.

⁴
Monroe, p. 24. On the document his name appears as "Martin Mourisee." Pearson's Genealogies of the First Settlers of Schenectady, p. 239, which was enclosed with the letter dated 19 June 1972 from the Sch. Co. Hist. Society, indicates he was in Beverwyck in 1661 and died early in 1662. Hall reports he was unmarried (p. 87.)

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Mohawk Country was now open wide, and the Van Slycks removed to the new post which guarded its entry.

The new settlement on the rich bottomlands, where the Van Slycks made their home in 1661, was to prosper and grow to a point where some eleven years later, its citizens would again petition--this time to expand the town farther west on the river flat. By this time, 1672, Jacques had five of his nine children.²

The deed was executed four years before the death of Cornelis and made the stipulation that Jacques was to keep the first flat or plain, unless the inhabitants of Schannechtade who were gathered at the Albany Court to execute the deed would pay him "two Rundlets of Brandy and one hundred hand of Wampum." On the 13th day of July 1672, Jacques, who had absented himself from Albany during the proceedings, received two rundlets of brandy--no mention is made of the wampum. The Mohawks received lead, powder, "beere and one koatt of duffels" for the sale of their land; and the township of Schannechtade now extended 16 miles long up and down the river. (It ended west at Towareoune Hill at Hoffman's and from the town down the river four miles to Ael Place on either side.)³

1

Schenectady was probably derived from the Indian word Schonowe of S'Gaun-ha-ha, meaning door or gate. (See Reid, p. 49.)

2

Hall, p. 86. All of Jacques' children were born in Schannectade.

3

Monroe, p. 24, pp. 51-55. The purchase of land was not to nullify a previous grant, or patent, of land to Jacques between Stone and Platte Creeks made "October last past," and the Low Land lying along the river side on the south, land lying north of Schenectady containing 40 morgans of land (80 acres), and 40 Morgans of Woodland on the west side of Platte Creek.