

acknowledged that he is well, truly and honestly indebted to Sweerus Teunise, in the sum of six hundred and ninety-three guilders in beavers, for goods and sundries to his content received; which aforesaid sum he, Jacus Cornelisse, promises to pay in the year of our Lord 1668, in the month of May; for the payment of said sum, pledging his person and estate, real and personal, more especially mortgaging the Island lying at Schonhecheda named Marten's Island, renouncing all exceptions which might militate against this obligation. Done in Fort Orange, the 3d July, A.D., 1664

The mark of ACKES, Jacus Cornelissen" <sup>188</sup>

A footnote explains that Jacus Cornelisse is

"Jaques Cornelise Van Slyck alias Gautsch alias Itsychosaquachka, one of the three children of Cornelis Antonissen Van Slyck alias Broer Cornelis and a Mohawk woman. Jaques had a brother Marten who gave name to the great Island lying west of Schenectady and a sister Hiletie who was a well known interpreter and married Pieter Danielse Van Olinda"

Frans Janse Pruyn, acting on Jacques' behalf in 1668, granted a house, lot, barn, garden and fruit trees in the colony of Rensselaerswyck to Jan Labatie who in turn granted the same properties to Barent Pieterse Coeymans five days later.

"Appeared before us, undersigned, commissaries of Albany, Frans Janse Pruyn, acting for Ackes Cornelise, who declares that in true rights, free ownership he grants, conveys and makes over by those presents, to and for the behoof of Jan Labatie, his heirs and successors or assigns, in the grantor's certain house, lot, barn, garden and fruit tress, standing and lying in colony Rensselaerswyck, according to the evidence of the vendue book of said colony bid off by said Labatie at public sale, of date the 16 of January 1664, extending and bounding on the westerly side the Herr patroon of the colony, northerly corst kouts [sic] easterly and southerly the public road, as the same lies in length, breadth and fence, free and unencumbered with no claim standing or issuing against the same, excepting the right of the patroon of the colony according to the descriptions and contents of the conditions and proposals of said vendue book, and by virtue of a conveyance of date the [illegible] of May, new style, 1665, in the Esopus; without the grantor's making the least claim thereto, also acknowledging that he is fully paid and satisfied therefore, the last penny with the first, therefore given *plenam actionem cessam*, and full power to the aforesaid Labatie, his heirs and successors or assigns, to do with and dispose thereof as he might do with his patrimonial estate and effects; promising to protect and free the aforesaid house, lot, barn, garden and fruit trees from all trouble, actions and liens of every persona as is right, and further, nevermore to do nor suffer anything to be done

<sup>188</sup> ERAR V.1: 354

against the same, with or without law, in any manner, on pledge according to law.  
Done in Albany, the 7th of January, 1668/9.

Frans Jansen Pruen [sic]

Witnesses Jan Verbeeck, Jan Thomase. In my presence: Ludovicus Cobes,

Secretary" <sup>189</sup>

By 1670 Jacques had built an inn at the corner of Washington Street and Cucumber Alley. He also had a house lot on the west corner of Washington Street and Cucumber Alley, with a front on the former street of 166 feet and extending back to the Binne Kill. The alley on the north side was the passage to the Binne Kill, which he could cross by means of a small boat, to his farm on Van Slyck's Island. By this date, Jacques and Grietje had at least four children, all born at Schenectady. No baptism records have been found for Jacques and Grietje's children, no doubt due to the burning of the town in February 1690. However Jacques' will lists his children as: Susanna, Grietje <sup>190</sup>, Herman, Cornelis, Geertruyt, Marte, Helena, Fytie <sup>191</sup> and Lydia. If the order they are listed in his will is their birth order, and if we assign an arbitrary two years between births, we can deduce birth dates beginning with Susanna in 1663 to Lydia in 1679. These estimated dates fit well with marriages and births of their children, and these are the birth dates I have assigned in this book for convenience.

Tapping, or the selling of spirits, was a much sought-after privilege in the early settlements. In Schenectady, Jacques Cornelise Van Slyke and Cornelis Cornelissen Viele both wanted the right to serve liquor to the natives and this developed into a long-standing feud between the two men. In 1671 Viele petitioned the Albany courts for permission to tap liquor and to provide lodging and accommodation. Van Slyke was then the only village tapster, and this was a direct challenge to him. Their dispute over tapping rights and privileges created so much dissension that the case became the concern of the governor of New York. In 1672 Antonia Slaghboom the widow of Jonas Bronck and Arent Van Curlar, was given a license from Gov. Lovelace, in consideration of the loss of her husband and of her home by fire, to trade with the natives. It was thought that this would stop the quarrels of the other two tapsters, Cornelis Cornelise Viele and "Akes Cornelise Gautsch, the Indian" <sup>192</sup> Jacques was not successful in maintaining sole rights to tapping.

Prior to this,  
"a petition of some patentees complaining about the tapping done by Cornelis Cornelissen Vielen" <sup>193</sup>

<sup>189</sup> ERAR V. 1: 453-454

<sup>190</sup> Grietje is the diminutive for Margaret or Margrieta and that is likely the name she was baptised with.

<sup>191</sup> Fytie is the diminutive for Sophia, and that may be the name she was baptised with.

<sup>192</sup> GFFSS:213

<sup>193</sup> *ibid*

Lorine McGinnis Schulze. *The Van Slyke Family in America* (continued).

In 1668 Jan Gerritsen van Marcken, the village schout, had also challenged Jacques' tapping rights, but he was not successful.

In 1678 fire destroyed the dwellings of Jacques Van Slyke and Sweer Teunissen van Velsen at Schenectady. On 29 January, 1678 they petitioned the courts at Albany for permission to tear down houses they owned outside Albany's walls and to be allowed to haul them away on their sleighs to Schenectady. On June 12, van Velsen had taken down his Albany house and carried it to Schenectady.<sup>194</sup> The house was hauled away on sleighs 30 Jan. 1678.

Schenectady had traditionally been a settlement of both farmers and traders, but after 1661 the villagers were limited to farming. Soon an illegal fur trade developed in Schenectady. In 1663 Stuyvesant tried to coerce the proprietors of Schenectady into signing a bond agreeing they would not continue trading at Schenectady with "any of the savages". They refused to sign and composed a letter of protest reminding Stuyvesant that a patent for land had been granted there to

"Jan Barents Wemp and Jacques N [Jacques Cornelissen Van Slyke] without such servitude or lien as is proposed in the aforesaid draft of the bond."

This referred to earlier privileges granted to Jan and Jacques as original settlers, in the form of permission to trade at the village. By 1669 there had been complaints that Schenectady residents openly traded with the natives, and so the court at Albany reiterated the prohibition against trade with the natives and fined any caught doing so. The villagers petitioned to have this restriction lifted, but were refused. In 1670 Schenectady's population was given permission to trade but only if they did so at Albany.

Albany continued to seek a monopoly on trade, and to prevent the illegal fur trade at Schenectady, Albany's courts ruled that all traffic of wagons and horses must obtain a license prior to departure from Schenectady. In resisting Albany authorities, traders at Schenectady resorted to bribery, threats, evasion and even violence. Albany magistrates complained of a lack of respect from Schenectady as a whole, including the Schenectady officials. In 1681 the Sheriff accused a Schenectady villager of "trading with an Indian" in the village. The resident interpreters, Jacques Cornelissen Van Slyke and Cornelis Cornelissen Viele, refused to act as interpreters in the matter, even though they were commanded to do so "in his Majesty's name." The Sheriff brought suit against Viele and Jacques for their refusal, but Viele stated that he did not refuse except conditionally, while Jacques claimed

"he was not commanded to do so in the King's name....or, at least, he did not hear it."<sup>195</sup>

<sup>194</sup>ARS II in MF

<sup>195</sup>ARS III 68-69 in MF:73

Jacques and his sister Hilletie were well known as interpreters and were much sought after. They were among the few of Schenectady's inhabitants who had contact with the colony's English hierarchy, and this was due to their position as interpreters at native conferences and as ambassadors to the Iroquois. Most of the residents of Schenectady were unknown beyond the village, but Jacques Van Slyke, referred to as a half-breed, was an exception, as were the rest of the Van Slyke, the Viele and the Glen families, who were in fact well known outside of the Mohawk valley community. Another sister to Jacques and Hilletie was Lea Van Slyke, who was called "the Indian wife of Claes Willemsen van Coppernol." Lea also lived at the village of Schenectady and although Burke refers to her with the comment that it is not certain whether she was a Mohawk woman or "another sister to the van Slycks", it appears she was indeed a sister. By 1707 both Jacques and Hilletie were dead; Lea, then married to an Englishman, Jonathan Stevens, survived them only a few years.

In 1679 and 1680 Jasper Danckaerts visited Schenectady from the Netherlands, keeping a journal of his trip. He mentions Jacques Cornelissen Van Slyke, who according to Danckaerts,

"was also a half-breed, who had made profession of Christianity, and had been baptised, and who was not by far as good as she (Jacques' sister Hilletie), but on the contrary very wicked" <sup>196</sup>

Danckaerts goes on to add that he believes Jacques had been a good Christian until he was corrupted by the residents of Schenectady,

"for this place is a godless one, being without a minister, and having only a homily read on Sundays."

Jacques' nephew Wouter, a full-blooded Mohawk according to Danckaerts, <sup>197</sup> lived at Schenectady with his uncle. Wouter spoke no Dutch and had abandoned all his native friends and family in favour of living as a Christian. He suffered from jeers and abuse from both the Mohawks and from the Christians. Danckaerts' notes that Wouter had

"betaken himself entirely to the Christians and dresses like them. He has suffered much from the other Indians and his friends" <sup>198</sup>

According to Danckaert, Wouter's thoughts were occupied day and night by God and Jesus. Wouter was struggling to learn the Dutch language so he could be instructed in

<sup>196</sup>JJD: 205

<sup>197</sup>The only way Wouter could be a full-blooded Mohawk and nephew to Hilletie and Jacques would be if he were the son of their deceased brother Marten Maurits. Marten is said by tradition to have taken an Indian wife before he died in 1662, and so a child of theirs could be considered, in Danckaert's eyes, to be full-blooded Mohawk.

<sup>198</sup> JJD

Christianity, and Jacques' sister Hilletie gave him what help she could. According to Danckaerts, Jacques Cornelissen not only failed to help Wouter, he actively hindered Wouter's desires.

"His uncle, with whom he lived, was covetous, and kept him only because he was profitable to him in hunting beaver. He therefore would hardly speak a word of Dutch to him, in order that he might not be able to leave him too soon and go among the Christians." <sup>199</sup>

Robert Sanders and Hilletie told Danckaerts that Jacques sent Wouter into the woods among the natives, to hunt for beaver so that he, Jacques, might profit. One story told to Danckaerts was of a time when Jacques and Wouter went out shooting for deer, and Jacques began to call Wouter a "stupid Indian" who could not shoot. Jacques claimed that he, a Christian, would have the better hunt than Wouter, and they separated. Wouter prayed to God to send him a deer and one appeared. He shot the animal but when he took the deer to his uncle, Jacques was angry that Wouter had shot something and he had not. When Wouter claimed that the deer was given to him in answer to a prayer to God, Jacques was ashamed. However, Danckaerts goes on to add that this did not change Jacques' actions for the better, although Hilletie was very much moved by the story, as was Danckaerts himself. Wouter related yet a second story of being sent an animal by God and how his heart was full with his love for God.

"in the presence of five or six persons who were well versed in the Mohawk language, and bore testimony that he (Wouter) said what she (Hilletie Van Slyke) interpreted, and that it was not enlarged" <sup>200</sup>

Next Wouter related a story of finding a bush in the shape of a man's hand, which he took as a sign from God. The bush, Wouter believed, represented a helping hand, one stronger and wiser than his. In Wouter's own words,

"It is true I have forsaken the Indians and have come among Christians, but this cannot help me unless a third power make me a true Christian and enable me to learn the language that I may inquire, read and enter into the grounds of Christianity"<sup>201</sup>

Wouter took the bush back with him to his uncle's house, and Danckaerts relates how he himself had seen it and held it. Wouter then presented the bush to Robert Sanders, who took it to Albany.

<sup>199</sup> JD:206

<sup>200</sup>ibid:208

<sup>201</sup> ibid:209