

When Danckaerts asked Hilletie why she did not send Wouter to a place where he could learn the language and Christianity, Hilletie replied that her brother Jacques would never hear of sending Wouter away as he kept him

"as a kind of servant such as the English have, for the sake of vile gain, and although he (Wouter) was free and bound to nobody, would never speak a word of Dutch to him, so that he might not lose him."

The second difficulty according to Hilletie was Wouter's age, which she gave as either 24 or 26 years, and which would not make it easy to find a place for him to board. Danckaerts offered to take Wouter with him on his return to the Netherlands, where, he said, Wouter

"should never be our servant or slave....and if God should give him further the grace he would be our brother and as free as we were"

That same night, Wouter, Hilletie and her husband Peter Danielse van Olinda, Adam Vrooman and his wife Engeltie came to see Danckaerts about Wouter's possible future. It was decided that Wouter would go with Danckaerts, and the next morning, Friday April 26, 1680, Wouter was there early. As Danckaerts went around to say his goodbyes to Hilletie and others in the community, Jacques Van Slyke arrived. Jacques began to question Danckaerts as to Wouter's going to the Netherlands with them. He asked Danckaerts what trade they would teach Wouter, and who would be his security in the event he were captured by Turks. Jacques and Robert Sanders exchanged words and Sanders accused Jacques of only keeping Wouter for the profit Wouter brought to him. Danckaerts and his party eventually rode off, leaving Jacques still there. They arrived in Albany at Sander's house after a five hour ride. Danckaert's journal does not mention Wouter again, and nothing further is known of him. <sup>202</sup>

It was not unusual for natives and whites to live together in Schenectady for there and in Albany, they lived together, traded together, slept in the same rooms, and ate at the same table. The distinction between white and natives did not seem to be as sharp a line in the Mohawk Valley as elsewhere in the New World. Danckaerts mentions that the Dutch in these outlying communities had become wild and untamed, reckless, unrestrained, haughty and more addicted to cursing and swearing. Jacques' Mohawk nephew, Wouter, left Schenectady in 1680 to rendezvous with Jasper Danckaerts at Boston for a journey to the Netherlands. Nothing further is known of him. It is my belief that Wouter may have been a son of Jacques' brother Marten and this is discussed in the chapter on Marten.

Jacques' ownership of the First Flat above Schenectady was provided for by the Mohawks in their 1672 deed with the Schenectady magistrates. At the signing of this deed, the stipulation had been made that Jacques was to keep the first flat unless the

<sup>202</sup> ibid

inhabitants of Schenectady paid him "two rumlets of Brandy and one hundred beads of wampum" On the 13 July 1672 Jacques received two rumlets of brandy while the Mohawks received lead, powder, beer and a coat of duffels for their land. His sisters Hilletie and Lea also received several properties from the Mohawks. Gradually the Schenectady court awarded more land to other individuals but on 4 October 1683, representatives of the Mohawk tribe complained to Governor Thomas Dongan, stating that they had never meant to give up full control of their lands to anyone other than Arent van Curlar and the Van Slykes.

"That one Arent Van Corlaer bought all Schannectade, & payed them for it but now there be some who have bought only the Grasse, & pretend to the land Allso, they say Allso that they have bought the first flatt, but that is not so, for it belongs to Acques Cornelissen....for he is of their people, &.....that there are writeings made of a sale of land but It was never sold but only the Grasse tho it may be some drunken fellows may have made som Writeings without their knowledge. That they have only bought the grasse & are now going to live upon it, but they ought to pay for the land as well as the Grasse, & that they had given some to that woman (Hillah & another Lea who have the propirety of it) the other have only the grasse" <sup>203</sup>

The Mohawks referred to attempts made to dispossess Jacques (Akes) Cornelissen Van Slyke of his ownership of the first flat. Governor Dongan's reply revealed the dissatisfaction with the people of Schenectady with Jacques.

"The people of Schannectady say they sent Acques to purchase the Land in the name of their Town, and that Acques bought it in his own name, <sup>204</sup>& they sent allso one Kemel<sup>205</sup> to purchase it for the Towne; the Indians told them that Acques had bought & paid some part of the payment" <sup>206</sup>

Thus Viele and Jacques Van Slyke were once more opponents, this time over the acquisition of land from the Mohawks.

By 1683, there were many people who were dissatisfied with Jacques Cornelissen Van Slyke's handling of the land negotiation with the Mohawks, and they hired Cornelis Cornelissen Viele to act on their behalf. This may have been indicative of the divisions affecting Schenectady's first patentees and later arrivals who desired a more equitable share of village resources such as land. In November 1684 Governor Dongan issued a patent to Schenectady legalizing the earlier 1672 transfer of land negotiated by the Mohawks and the Schenectady magistrates. For a yearly stipend of 40 bushels of winter wheat, Dongan presented the community with a territory of 120 square miles. He then created an independent group of five trustees with authority to manage the unpatented

<sup>203</sup>MF:153-154

<sup>204</sup>The inhabitants of Schenectady later compensated Jacques van Slyke for the land.

<sup>205</sup>Most likely this is Cornelis Cornelissen Viele who was known as Keeman by the Mohawks

<sup>206</sup>MF:154

lands, even though this was protested by both the Mohawks and the villagers. The Mohawk tribes were becoming increasingly unhappy with the Dutch, and were being wooed by the French through the native leader Kryn.

By 1685 the English-French rivalry had become open conflict, as the French experienced a crisis in their fur trade, which was a lucrative business for them. By 1685 the French governor in New France was ordered to curb the aggression of the Iroquois and deal with threats to the French fur trade, no matter who these threats came from. By 1687 a French army was striking at both the English and the Iroquois.

Schenectady, throughout this time period, was of great assistance to the English and the services of the Dutch at Schenectady were in demand as interpreters. Cornelis Cornelissen Viele and Jacques Cornelissen Van Slyke had acted as interpreters since 1660. Jacques, who is described in official records as "formerly an Indyan", was trusted by the Mohawks due to his Mohawk blood. During a conference in 1688, representatives of the Mohawks proposed to Governor Andros that

"the propositions made yesterday to us, may be left in writeing [sic] with Akus the Interpreter, to whom wee may have recourse for information"

Burke states in *The Mohawk Frontier* that

"of all the seventeen interpreters, van Slyck may have been the best, and his services were in demand as far away as New York City, where in August 1687 he helped to examine a 'Christian Maquase brought a Prisonner from Cannada' " <sup>207</sup>

In 1687, when a French attack was anticipated, Governor Thomas Dongan wintered briefly at Schenectady. He received proposals from the Five Nations presented to him by Jacques Van Slyke and Daniel Jansen van Antwerpen. <sup>208</sup>

In 1689 the uprising initiated by the New York City militia and led by Jacob Leisler had far-reaching and divisive consequences for Schenectady. Leisler's Rebellion and the events surrounding it created dissension in the community over the issue of land ownership. The villagers divided into two groups - first settlers versus later arrivals, who both wanted access to land, the most valuable commodity known. Jacques Cornelissen, aged 49, aligned himself with the anti-Leislerian party in 1689, along with Willem Teller, Gerrit Bancker, and Pieter Danielsen van Olinda, all surviving village proprietors. Allied with them were the sons of original proprietors, such as Sanders and Johannes Sanderse Glen. Jacques' involvement was in having aided the Albany Convention with Indian Affairs. Others who opposed Leisler in 1689 were Adam Vrooman who later married Jacques' wife, Grietje Ryckman. Other names on this list are Sweer Teunissen van Velsen, Johannes Appel and Jan van Eps.

<sup>207</sup> MF:93-94

<sup>208</sup>MF

The pro-Leisler faction were a group somewhat younger in years who had arrived at Schenectady after its original settlement. These included Douwe Aukes, David Christoffelsen, Reynier Schaats and Reyer Schermerhorn. Symon Schermerhorn, Myndert Wemp, Johannes Pootman, Claes Fredericksen van Petten, Isaac Cornelissen Swits, and Arnout Viele. Many of the pro-Leisler individuals were of lesser means but this is not true of all, as the Schermerhorns, Myndert Wemp and Douwe Aukes all owned slaves. The Schermerhorns were the sons of Jacob Jansen who in 1660 was one of the principal traders at Beverwyck and who left a vast estate at his death in 1688.

Many families were divided by the Leisler Rebellion. Two of Jacques Cornelissen Van Slyke's daughters married two Bradt brothers, the sons of Arent Andreissen Bradt and Cathalynta de Vos.<sup>209</sup> These Bradt brothers were associated with the anti-Leislerian party but their sisters were the wives of Reyer Schermerhorn, Claes Fredericksen van Patten and Johannes Pootman, who were pro-Leislerians. Divisions at Schenectady continued even until the 1700s as evidenced by the signing of three addresses on 30 December 1701 to King William III signed by men who were in opposition to the Leislerian party. Three of Jacques Cornelissen Van Slyke's sons: Harmen, Cornelis and Martin, signed this document. They were three of nineteen Schenectady residents who did so. They were also opponents of Reyer Schermerhorn, and siding with the Van Slyke brothers were Samuel Bradt and Johannes Myndertse (both of who married sisters of the Van Slyke brothers), Adam Vrooman and his three sons: Jan, Hendrick, and Barent. Also against Schermerhorn were Pieter van Olinda who was married to Hilletie Van Slyke and their son Daniel. Another with ties to the Van Slyke family was Harmen Vedder who married Grietje Van Slyke, another daughter of Jacques Cornelissen<sup>210</sup>.

At the beginning of 1690, war parties assembled at Quebec, Trois Rivieres and Montreal to attack New England and New York. The largest party consisting of 114 Canadians and 96 native warriors left Montreal in January headed for Schenectady. The invaders were led by Nicolas d'Ailleboust de Manthet, Jacques le Moyne de Sainte-Helene and Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, while the natives were led by Kryn. The attackers were under orders to inflict as much destruction against Schenectady and its inhabitants as they could. French prisoners taken later stated they had orders

<sup>209</sup>The author descends from the brother of Arent Andriessen Bradt, Albert Andreissen born ca 1607 in Frederikstad, Norway. The interlinking of families is very complex and tangled. Burke states in *The Mohawk Frontier* that "the most intricate relationships were among the van Slyck, van Olinda and Vrooman families." [MF: 169] Jacques Cornelissen van Slyke's wife Grietje Ryckman, was sister to the first wife of Adam Vrooman. Adam was the brother of another of the author's ancestors, Eva Hendrickse Vrooman, who married Jochem Lambertse Van Valkenburg. Grietje Ryckman married her brother-in-law Adam Vrooman, after the death of his wife and her husband in 1690.

<sup>210</sup>Grietje, or Margaret van Slyke was the widow of Andries Arentsen Bradt, and she and Harmen Vedder were married on 10 December 1691.

"to murder and DeStroy all People they mett withall at Shinnechtady except Such as beg'd for quarters; as also to Burn ye Place and to take with them those that they could cary along"<sup>211</sup>

After seventeen days' march, the attackers reached Schenectady at eleven o'clock at night on February 9. Due to the extreme cold and knee-deep snow, they did not wait to attack but struck immediately. Schenectady had been built in the shape of a square palisade with only two gates. Native women discovered in a shelter just outside the village, were forced to show the invaders the first gate, which was found to be open. The second gate was not found and the invaders encircled the village before attacking. The French method of attack was to divide into small groups of six or seven in front of each house, then enter the home, putting all who defended it, to death. Within two hours, the village had been taken by the French and many villagers lay dead.

According to the French, the only home not attacked was that of Sanders Glen<sup>212</sup> but when asked to surrender the following morning, Glen refused. The French promised Glen quarter for himself and his family if he surrendered, and this he did. At noon on Sunday, the French and natives left, taking 30 or 40 horses, and 27 captives as well as the severed head of the minister of Schenectady, Petrus Tesschenmaeker. Many of the sixty villagers who were killed had been burned in the fires that were lit when the houses were torched. The loss of life at Schenectady was greater than at any other town attacked by the French, due to the element of surprise and the ease with which the French and natives gained entrance to the village, making it impossible for soldiers and villagers to resist.

Reports stated that the devastation of Schenectady was almost total. All the houses, barns and cattle were destroyed except, as noted, the home of Sanders Glen. Of the 60 white villagers killed, 19 were men, 22 were young men, 7 were women, 1 was a young woman, and 11 were children. As well there were 9 soldiers from Connecticut, 16 slaves, 1 native, and 1 French female prisoner killed that night in the attack.

Accounts differ as to the number of survivors, with the French insisting they spared 50 or 60 people; two separate accounts of the attack stating that 25 survivors remained at Schenectady. However, records show that the heads of 50 Schenectady households were provided with aid at Albany in March. The discrepancy in numbers suggests that some of the inhabitants of the village may have been absent the night of the massacre. Jacques Cornelise Van Slyke was one of the twenty-five Dutch villagers who lived through the massacre. Shipping records<sup>213</sup> have revealed the name of Jacques as making a sailing voyage in 1690. The item reads Van Slyck, Akes Cornelissen, age 50,

<sup>211</sup> LIR in MF

<sup>212</sup> Robert Livingston stated that 6 or 7 houses had been spared. In June 1691 the Iroquois were known to be burning the deserted houses and barns near Schenectady and killing any livestock they found in the woods.

<sup>213</sup> Ship Passenger Lists, New York and New Jersey (1600-1825)"1982 supplement by Boyer.

New York, 1690 but no ship is listed. <sup>214</sup>Apparently he died not too long after making the trip so he too may have been absent from Schenectady on the night of the massacre. His wife and children also survived the massacre.

There are many recorded tales of individuals and their plight. Symon Schermerhorn, although badly wounded, managed to escape to ride for five hours through the snow to reach Albany in order to spread the alarm. Riders were immediately sent to Esopus asking for assistance, and to Kinderhook and Claverack to warn farmers there. The cannon at Albany was fired to warn the nearby residents of Rensselaerswyck. On Monday February 10, a burial party was dispatched from Albany to Schenectady to attempt to bury the dead and to tend to survivors. A force of 140 Mohawks and Dutch pursued the French and natives and within a month, four prisoners were returned. Eventually 18 prisoners were released or escaped between 1690 and 1699. English captives often chose to remain among their native captors, but from the captives at Schenectady not one remained with the natives or French, not even, according to Burke, those most influenced by their stay with the Canadian natives such as Jan Baptist van Eps and Lourens Claesen Van der Volgen.

Most massacre survivors found refuge at Albany. On March 28, 1690, reference is made to supplies including clothes and material for clothing having reached Albany and being distributed to survivors of the Schenectady massacre. Albany became congested with the Schenectady survivors in February, then the arrival in May of troops from New England for an attack against Canada. Disease, consisting of smallpox and "the bloody flux" was prevalent during the spring of 1690. Jacques Cornelissen Van Slyke was at Albany on May 18, 1690

"lying....sick abed" <sup>215</sup>

Jacques may have been sick the previous fall, <sup>216</sup> but he testified against Robert Livingston on 1 April 1690 and was not noted as being in ill health at that time. He also traveled, apparently back to the Netherlands and home to Albany prior to May 1690. However he died soon after, having made his will on the 8th day of May 1690. In his will, Jacques expressed the intention that his wife and children should return to burnt-out Schenactady and reoccupy the family's property.

The will of Jacques Cornelissen Van Slyke follows:

"In the name of God, Amen. Know all men whom it may concern, that on this eighteenth of May anno sixteen hundred and ninety, at Albany, being in the second year of the reign of William and Mary, King and Queen of Great Britain, Jaques Comelisse van Slyck, residing at Schennechtady, lying here in the city aforesaid Sick

<sup>214</sup>Early New Yorkers and Their Ages by K. Scott, p.295.

<sup>215</sup> MF:199

<sup>216</sup>Yates states that he died of pulmonary disease, but does not give his source for this.

abed, but having to all outward appearances the perfect use and command of his understanding, faculties, memory and speech who, considering the frailty of human life and the uncertainty of the hour of death, has of his own motion, without inducement, persuasion or misleading of anyone, but moved thereto voluntarily after mature consideration thought it advisable not to leave this world without first having disposed of his temporal effects granted to him by the Almighty. Commending first and foremost his immortal soul into the hands of God and his body to a Christian burial, he nominates, constitutes and appoints his wife Gerritje Ryckman his sole and universal heir of all his estate and effects, in manner following:

So soon as their son Herman enters the marriage state, she shall first of all let him have by way of gift fourteen morgens of land lying above Schanechtady, on the first flat, above Sassiasn, the testator's wife to have the use of all the other land, grounds, houses and buildings belonging to him, but the whole of the personal estate and effects she, shall be at liberty to use, spend, sell, alienate and dispose of. as she pleases, in like manner as the testator in his lifetime could do, without rendering an accounting or inventory, much less furnishing bond or security, to any relatives, to the guardians of his children or children's children, to the honorable orphan masters or constables, to the inferior and supreme courts of this government, or to any person whomsoever, all and singular of whom he excludes and shuts out, notwithstanding that some law or laws may direct otherwise, which he wills shall in this case be inoperative and of no effect, appointing her as executrix and administratrix during the time of her widowhood; but if she again enters into the marriage estate, she shall to the children begotten by them, to wit: Susanna, Grietje, Herman, Cornelis, Geertruyt, Marte, Helena, Fytie, Lidia and those who may still be procreated by them, apportion and relinquish the just half of all the estate and effects to said children then living, wherein each child shall equally participate without any difference by reason of sex, without prejudice to the donation of fourteen morgens of land to Herman as herein-before written.

And although the daughters have likewise their interest in the lands, the testator wills that said lands shall remain in the possession of the sons subject to a proper appraisal, and the value of each daughter's portion be paid within the five following years, each year a just fifth part; which lands also may not be sold or alienated by the sons but must descend to each son's male child or children, and failing of these, to the nearest relatives in the male line, who may lawfully bear the name of Van Slyck and be of the testator's lawful seed; but the male lineage failing, the nearest female line shall inherit and succeed to the aforesaid estate even as the male line, because the testator expressly wills and desires that the aforesaid land shall not be alienated from his future blood and lineage but must always return thither again. But if his aforesaid wife marries again, she shall immediately, before the solemnization of such marriage, cause to devolve upon those who are of age their portion and (under sufficient security) retain the minor's portion and enjoy the use and profits thereof until the time of the majority of each, with the understanding that whoever is of age may demand his portion without waiting until the majority of the younger; therefore

she is holden to do by those underage in all ways as an honorable, faithful mother ought to do by her child or children, Without any reserve or exception.

And in order that all, the aforesaid conditions may in honest simplicity and justice be carried out, the testator appoints Mr. Pieter Schuyler, Mr. Dirk Wessells and Johannes Glenn as guardians over his minor children, who also shall be Joined with his aforesaid wife, to act as mediators in case any difference or misunderstanding arise between her and the children and to settle the same in love and friendship, so that the maternal and filial affection be not extinguished and that the testator's aforesaid will be not broken and Violated; which burden, by the testator's humble request, their honors will please take upon themselves, since Christian duty obligates us to assist the widows and orphans by word and deed.

All that is herein before written the testator declares to be his testamentary disposition and last will, which he desires to have effect from the weightiest to the least article thereof, whether as will, codicil, gift in anticipation of death or among the living, or any other bequest however it may be named, notwithstanding that all the formalities required by the laws of this government may not be observed herein, desiring that the utmost benefit of the law may be enjoyed herein for the maintenance of the same.

Thus done, signed and scaled on the 8th of May 1690, at Albany as aforesaid.

This is signed A C K E S by JAQUES CORNELISE VAN SLYK with his own hand (L. S.)

Signed and sealed  
in our presence,  
A. Appell  
Jacob Staets, chirurgion  
In my presence,  
JAN BECKER" <sup>217</sup>

Jacques was 50 years old when he died, leaving a widow, Margaret, daughter of Harman Janse Ryckman of Albany. Margaret, or Grietje, as she was called, married her brother-in-law Adam Vrooman on the 21 Feb. 1692 in Albany New York. <sup>218</sup> Adam's wife, Margaret's sister, Engeltie, <sup>219</sup>had been killed at the massacre at Schenectady, along with their infant son. By Jan 13, 1697 Grietje Ryckman was dead, Adam Vrooman marrying for the third time in Albany to Grietje Takelse Heemstraat. <sup>220</sup>

<sup>217</sup> ERAR: V. 4 pp 119-121

<sup>218</sup>HSCNY:234

<sup>219</sup> There is confusion over the first wife of Adam Vrooman, with some sources claiming her as Engeltie Ryckman, sister of Margaret Ryckman, and others stating she is Engletie Blom. It is outside the scope of this genealogy to attempt to discuss this and interested readers should refer to the several books which mention her.

<sup>220</sup>GDS