

# THE FOUNDERS



Early (family) History of U.S.

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## *Early (family) History of America*

The **founders** referred to in the title were the leaders of the original New Amsterdam/New England colonies from the seventeenth century: **William Bradford, John Winthrop, Thomas Dudley, Roger Williams, Kiliaen van Rensselaer, Peter Stuyvesant, John Winthrop Jr., Brandt Aren van Slechtenhorst, Olaf van Cortlandt, Peitre Schyuler, Richard 'Bull' Smith, Robert (First Lord) Livingston**, among others. including **John Jacob Astor**, who founded, a century and a half after these others, the first American settlement on the west coast. They founded cities and states and commercial empires and dynasties.

Their stories intertwine, and in the course of time so did their families. The descendents of the **founders** have to be included in the larger picture, since the succeeding generations quickly formed regional dynasties that could, according to the social order of the times, only marry among one another, establishing a class system in America.

When the Founding Fathers, Washington, Jefferson et al., set about their business, they already had a country to found, with thirteen states and a tradition of democracy. Their portraits and statues grace our halls of state and our history books, but by contrast the **founders**, today's subjects from the century preceding the Revolution, who created the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York as well as the political traditions we live by, have not really been considered American. They left their native countries and sailed west, bringing with them the first waves of migrants, and for a while they were virtually independent. Now they are virtually forgotten. My mother's family is a product of that process, whatever it was, since these boldface names are all ancestors. Though that is interesting and curious, worth mentioning, the real value here is not in any self-esteem benefit, which is negligible, but rather in this access to the founding of our country that these family connections provide. They sparked my interest because they are ancestors, but their intertwined stories are

of general interest.

In a sense the founders have been hidden behind the dark curtain of ensuing social history, and this curtain has to be lifted before we can look behind it. The curtain: a ruling class! It has been many generations since my mother's family has resembled a ruling class, (it is anything but) so we are looking at an historical curiosity, a long faded vestige of a bygone era, which is nevertheless is an integral piece of the grand historical drama.. Though this book focuses on the seventeenth century, the consequences of these foundings, including the class system, will enter the conversation, at least in this introduction, which is trying to make sense of it all. The American Revolution will be covered in a later volume from the point of view of these clans and dynasties, also the Louisiana Purchase and the westward expansion.

The **founders** exist in a cultural limbo since their nationalities are not clear; except for **Astor** they predated our sovereign country by over a hundred years, and having left their native land they were no longer really English or Scottish or Dutch or German, so nobody can claim them with national pride. I have been wandering through their world, a panorama of early America that still stuns me; this is where it all came from, where talk rapidly became reality.

I group them under the term **founders**, which is not a common use of the term. The advantage for me is that the founders have all been individually parsed and drawn by countless great historians, but what is missing from the shelves is a gathering of these biographies into a book that covers them all and tells the larger picture. That is what I'm trying to do here, and the problem isn't overconfidence, (I have no confidence to speak of) it's a lack of any training in history or writing. Since lack of training and experience is how I approach all my projects, it turns out to be a characteristic of my daily struggle that I have to live with.. learning how to do something through repeated failure. But a different approach to history yields a different result, which this book represents. Though ancestor-worship is a kind of self-involvement, how could I notice this amazing collection of interrelated lives and not get curious? These stories represent the beginning of America. **Roger Williams**, the founder of Rhode Island and one of the subjects here, called his native Indian friends 'Americans', which would make this period the beginning of the end of America, but whatever it was, it was the beginning of what we see when we look around in almost any secular democracy .

One starting point in this project is the charter for the Massachusetts Bay Company which is long and boring, even by legal standards. Written in London in 1629, it is almost unreadable, and there is no reason why you should read it, but it represents the origins of the United States Government. It contains a lot boilerplate legalese about any profits from the company going to heirs and assigns, protecting the stockholders, but also, buried among the banal,

is the definition of a system, basically a self-governing corporation, that would rule the future citizens of New England. The political evolution was from a monocameral court, basically a church and congregation, turned into a bicameral civil court and later, after a century and a half of British rule, the system would bloom into the constitutions of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York and of the United States. The principals of government and civil rights developed on the fly in seventeenth century Boston, Plymouth and Providence were well represented in the U.S. Constitution.

Another path into this subject matter is a pair of genealogical charts written by my grandfather **Lawrence Grant White** that curiously reveal, like an item of Ripley's Believe it or Not, the colonial panorama mentioned above, of what has to be one of the most interesting times in history, when powerful puritan leaders created local participatory governments for the early settlers, while at the same time creating a ruling class that would control the colonies for many generations through dynastic intermarriage. The United States of America is many things to many people, like anything else, so it is hard to pin down the exact origins of the country, and due to our precariously dominant position internationally, the question 'where did it come from?' must sometimes arise in conversations around the world. To some extent, and to my great surprise, these family trees suggest some compelling answers to this particular query.

I'm far from an expert on history of any kind, even my personal history is a little foggy, but the following is a description of events as they oversimplified in my mind.

Historical Background for the founding of original colonies:

### **England early 17<sup>th</sup> Century**

England was fracturing, headed for Civil War. You could barely keep up with what the official doctrine was, since it all depended on who was on the throne. If you and your dogma were on top one day, you might be on the chopping block or burnt at the stake the next. European wars were usually Catholics vs Protestants, but the official religion of a country was always determined by the religion of the head of state. At the time European countries were mostly monarchies, a system of governing which is by definition dynastic. Dynasties intermarried for dynastic, not religious reasons, so in England things were stressed when the intermarriage of royal European families took place and contaminated the English royal family, who were heads of the Church of England, with popery (the worst insult from the mouth of a puritan) as per the French and Spanish royal families.

The issues in England were between, on one hand the Church of England, official and state-controlled, holding power through the time-honored tautology of the theocratic monarchy: 'God wills it'. This meant that the monarch could do whatever he or she wanted to, like the Pope, and the people would have to

pay for it. Also, the personal beliefs of the king and queen applied to all the subjects, no exceptions. This was confusing if the king and queen were of different branches of Christianity, and more confusing during the less than orderly successions to the thrones. While Spain and France were unambiguously Catholic, England was in flux between the lacy costume (catholic) and the unfrilly (puritan).

The unfrilly opposition was at first not outlaw or extreme, except in rare cases, but they were radicalized by the burnings at the stake, beheadings and torture that started with Mary Stuart. These ardent believers were driven by shared conviction that both the Papists, and by extension the Church of England, had long since strayed off the path of righteousness and lost their link to the God of the Old Testament. Through an amazing array of arguments, including predestination, anabaptism and a hundred other isms, mostly inspired by John Calvin, a dissenter who did not tolerate dissent, the Puritans challenged the royal monopoly on God's will, thereby undermining divine right as the lynchpin of royal power. The Puritans assumed that power for themselves, all the while remaining arrogantly humble, living blameless lives, drawing police reactions from the Crown, borderline martyrs.

This, it can be said, is where freedom came from. In a divine syllogism, Henry VIII took the spiritual power of the Pope onto himself, neatly justifying his rule over the people with the same argument employed by the throne of St. Peter, that God spoke through the particular individual sitting on the throne. By extending the same logic to their situation in turn, the Puritans took that power as theirs, claiming a personal connection with God, as manifested in a community (congregation) of living saints. They eventually dispensed divinity to the living saints of Boston in the form of congregational voting rights. **Roger Williams** in his genius conceived of religious freedom as a natural extension of personal divinity (dignity) burning like a flame of the soul, from whence John Adams and Thomas Jefferson et al. allotted this form of freedom to the citizens of the sovereign United States a century and a half later. I'm talking metaphorically, but these puritans thought metaphorically.

Puritan preachers Cotton, **Williams**, Davenport, Hooker, et al. derived their holier-than-the King authority from the Bible, which they read in Hebrew and Greek, which many of them had studied at Cambridge University. These clerics especially identified with the story of Moses and the ancient Israelites, and it's a safe bet that they thumped their bibles. The powers that were saw the Puritans as a threat to monarchy, and outlawed the movement.

Some congregations fled England, looking for safe haven in Holland, for many years absorbing Dutch language and culture. When they eventually embarked for the New World, they were plagued by ship problems that nearly doomed them. The intention of the Pilgrims had been to settle on Manhattan Island (where this account is being written), but their Dutch hosts had their eyes on that prize and sabotaged the Pilgrim ship by over-rigging it.

Determination won out, and the *Mayflower* and her cargo, which was basically the congregation of the Rev. Robinson, who didn't make the trip, landed on Cape Cod in 1620, then moved across the bay to settle Plymouth. Their story will be represented in the chapter on their longtime governor, **William Bradford**, but for a while **Roger Williams** commanded the pulpit in Plymouth.

The Dutch meanwhile were settling to the West and Southwest, in the Hudson Valley and beyond. The Dutch are represented by chapters on **Olaf van Cortlandt**, **Peter Styuvesant**, **Killean van Rensselaer**, and **Robert Livingston**.

The remaining Puritans in England had been riding out the political storms with a combined arsenal of legal acumen, political connections, and skill at avoiding arrest, and they wound up putting their dreams of a New Jerusalem into a commercial enterprise, the Massachusetts Bay Company. They had connections with sympathetic wealthy peers, and a license to form a Corporation with a charter bent on self-government. They brought the charter with them across the North Atlantic and founded Boston and all the towns surrounding it, and this area is the birthplace of American style of governing people most of whom by the very nature of their escape from England, did not want to be governed except by the word of God. It is no coincidence that the War of Independence started in Boston, since Boston started out independent from England's government and laws. **John Winthrop**, as leader of the first migration, is the focus on that story. The English Civil War had the same roots as the Great Migration to Massachusetts, and Oliver Cromwell watched with wonder and curiosity at the political evolution of the colonies. The Restoration ended the movement in England, but in New England, the Puritan style was here to stay, in the legal system, in the moral system, in the stark, crucifix-free churches and in the voting rights of congregations.

Massachusetts was originally a theocratic democracy, where powerful clerics like John Cotton assumed they held ultimate power over the populace (think Iran). They had no better example to follow until **Winthrop** ruled that the ministers couldn't overturn a legal action of the Civil Court. The ministers were outraged. **Winthrop's** friend **Roger Williams** said (generally speaking) 'If that's the case, the Civil Court can't tell us clerics, or any body for that matter, what to believe'. This was the flip side of the coin that separated church and state. **Roger Williams** was expelled from every settlement in New England for his vehement separatism, and when he founded Providence and the State of Rhode Island, another crucial pillar of our constitution was firmly set in the ground: freedom of conscience. You could walk around thinking whatever you want.

All that was needed for a future country were state borders and political continuity with the Dutch colonies, and all that would come in the next few decades before and after the British takeover of New Netherlands and the New England plantations in 1664.

The government of Boston has not changed that much in structure since its corporate founding, there is legal continuity between then and now, and many original laws are still on the books. The law banning **Roger Williams** from Massachusetts wasn't repealed until 1926.

Why do I tell you this absurdly condensed account of the New England spillover, with which you are probably familiar? First, to provide a broad introduction to the historical landscape that begat the founders of the New Amsterdam, New England colonies, the subjects of this book. Secondly, to introduce myself. I am not a historian, but I have a personal interest in these subjects. I present myself as a storyteller; and the yarns herein will be spun and the characters brought to life as well as I can manage. I don't expect anyone to be interested in this family, unless they are a relative (actually, none of my relatives have shown any interest in this project), but the history should be known to anyone with a curiosity about where most of the freedoms we enjoy came from, also how the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York came to be. It's puzzling why nobody else in the immediate clan had ever looked at this great subject, at least not back this far. The last two hundred years have been covered, as family and social history, published letters and biographies, memoirs and dark revelations, but the two hundred years before that were strangely off limits. "Drop it" some said of my project, so I didn't.

These founders mostly knew each other, or at least of each other, and in their conflicts and friendships there is a deep trove of revelations about our national character. Keeping in the foreground these personal relationships, I am tackling the structural problems that arise when one looks at the same historical events from different points of view, as parts of different stories.

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If any event could be called the beginning of our country as a political entity, a claim could be made that it was a meeting of high-end puritans at Sempringham Castle, in June, 1629, when **John Winthrop** laid out the vision for an independent, theocratic state in Massachusetts Bay. In the room were wealthy peers who saw economic opportunity in the New World, but also there was **Thomas Dudley**, the bailiff of Lincolnshire and future governor of Massachusetts, Rev. John Davenport founder of New Haven, Rev. John Hooker, founder of Hartford, **Roger Williams**, founder of Providence and Rhode Island, and **Winthrop** himself, founder of Boston and Massachusetts. What is odd is that nobody knows where Sempringham Castle is. I believe it became a monastery known as Sempringham Abbey, part of the confiscation of Catholic Church property in the previous century, but at any rate it was the seat of the Earl of Lincoln, Theophilus Clinton, a Puritan, at this crucial historical moment. The lords and ladies at the meeting declined to make the trip across the north

Atlantic, but later had some responsibility for the English Civil War, supporting the Roundheads against the Crown.

On the same day as the meeting at Sempringham Castle there was another meeting in London where the terms of the Charter for the Massachusetts Bay Company were being drawn up, mostly to protect the stockholders, who are listed over and over in the document, (no ancestors there, alas) but also, almost as a peripheral addendum, setting out the principles of self-determination that would within a year become the basis for popular government. On the application for the charter, the dotted line for the address of the company, where the company was to be headquartered, was left blank. The idea was to take the charter with them so that new laws could be enacted as needed, without having to be signed off by a London office. The New Jerusalem would be independent.

Nothing went smoothly, and death and privation were daily fare. The New Jerusalem (Boston) allegedly inhabited by Living Saints, never quite lived up to Moses' (**John Winthrop's**) vision of heaven on earth, since not a single Puritan could be called a 'saint' in the conventional sense, with the possible exception of **Roger Williams** or the Rev. John Hooker or Anne Hutchinson. All three of these charismatic dissenters were expelled from Boston for their heresies and led their congregations into the wilderness. By the second generation, three or four states and a democratic political and judicial system had been established (Anne Hutchinson ended up in Westchester and has a river named after her. She and most of her family, all but one daughter, were killed in the Dutch/Indian war of 1648?). Still **Winthrop's** speech to the huddled congregations before setting out from Dover, citing a vision of the 'city on a hill', has been quoted by many presidents and would-be presidents invoking the moral authority of our country.

**Roger Williams'** and **John Winthrop's** names are in bold because the family tie gives them a special place in my universe that Rev. Hooker and Anne Hutchinson do not have, since they are not relations. Most of the leaders of the Northeast colonies are relations, and this project is an attempt to grasp what if any significance this has (very little, it turns out) but also, much more importantly, who these people were who started it all. It is not entirely the fault of the democratically inclined founders that they also begat a class of intermarrying landowners. Some of these descendents of the **founders** held regional power for over a hundred years, even after the rent wars of the mid-eighteenth century forced the breakup of the manorial system in New York State. This is only one of many eye-rubbing insights that result from a look at these family histories.

The migratory Puritans barely considered themselves English, did not fly the English flag or pay taxes to the home country, or advertise any separation from the Church of England, but were careful not to let this be a concern back in Old England, fearing a military expedition would be sent to bring them into line. If that happened they had guns ready on Castle Island outside Boston, but also an English flag, with the cross of Saint George, to run up the flag pole

later? The historical picture of the War of Independence as a spontaneous explosion of freedom is subject to revision; it seems there may have been a powerful urge of the revolutionary generation to bring back the good old days, the autonomous political status and principals of the original New England colonies.

New York was a special case because back in the Seventeenth, the territory was won by right of arms by James, Duke of York and Albany, a Catholic, from Dutch control. **Peter Stuyvesant**, Director General of New Netherlands, surrendered to British guns and to the bloodless statecraft of **Gov. John Winthrop Jr.** of Connecticut, and New York became the first 'English' colony to be governed by a representative of the British government, Col. Richard Nicholls.

New England and Virginia plantations of the early seventeenth century were variously dependent on England and independent from England. Their draw for settlers and investors were equal parts freedom and economic opportunity, as the rights of congregations morphed into the rights of individuals, the rights of the aristocracy became, ostensibly, the rights of everyone, the comforts of the aristocracy eventually, through modern appliances, flushing toilets, electric grids and roadways, and all the other wonders of modern life, became the comforts of everyone, or more specifically the middle class. The founders who started this process were no longer English nor yet Americans, limbo-dwellers who set in motion our way of life. The founders were, coincidentally, almost all middle class.

The process they started, empowering the middle class, meant that much power migrated into the hands of the people who vote with their wallets and habits. It wasn't always like that, power in the old days accumulated at the top, which was the consequence of intermarriage of dynasties. Dynasties weren't just people, they were money and real estate, tenant farmers and local politics and militias. Now at least a portion of that power is in the hands of the middle class, the vast voting audience for political theater. Is this a good time to point out that the middle class is controlled by corporations who provide all the comforts?

Often in early history of our various civilizations nature had the power, the spirits of the mountains and the oceans had the power, but democratic activity, among other things, subjects the home planet to the demands of human comfort. The God of Genesis foolishly gave mankind dominion over the Earth and the other creatures, and the Earth may not survive this divine misstep. Democracy puts people's fate in their collective hands, but also puts the fate of the planet in these same hands, which creates an equation whereby the long range health of the planet has to be compatible with the short-range comfort of empowered individuals, or mass-scale disaster will ensue. The facts on the ground are that empowered individuals gobble the Earth's resources at an alarming unsustainable rate, rarely looking behind them at the human wake of debris and stressed ecosystems. Since this empowering started in early New England, that is another reason to look into this period. The rich guy gunning his 50ft cabin

cruiser down Long Island Sound represents the dark side of human empowerment, in a direct arc from **Roger Williams**.

## FAMILY BACKGROUND

My mother, her four sisters and three brothers grew up at Box Hill, the White compound that used to, in **Stanford White's** day, overlook Stony Brook Harbor on the north shore of Long Island. The view is now blocked by trees, but once it was a product of design, distant eucalyptus and cedars planted, trimmed, sand bars moved to please the master's eye. Though the property is still in family hands, the family no longer has the kind of clout that can change the distant landscape.

**Stanford White** was among many other things, a serious social climber, and befriended my other great grandfather, **Winthrop Chanler**, an heir to the Astor fortunes.. The eventual marriage of Stanford's son Lawrence to Winthrop's daughter Laura was all part of a process of interbreeding that went on well into the last century, long after the political power had slipped away from the original dynasties. How could he have guessed that this attention to dynastic intermarriage, that seemed so cool then, would in time have an almost negative value. This background does not define me or any of my cousins, and it would be sad if it did, but not long ago lineage defined one's identity in the social hierarchy, it was all people cared about. Now it's silly, actually rude to bring it up, which is one reason why I was advised against pursuing this project. That's a major change. Also, looking around, neither myself nor any of my friends are rich or famous, so the social hierarchy, whatever that might refer to, is not a factor in my life.

In this world you just don't talk about this lineage stuff unless it shows an upward arc, like the Horatio Alger stories, or Alex Hailey's *Roots*. The arc here is on the downward leg, socio-politically, so such talk displays self-importance of the unearned variety. It looks like you are boasting about your ancestors. You will look like a self-absorbed snob so leave the subject alone.

But the founders were also on the upward arc, like Horatio Alger and *Roots*, this is deep Americana, as real and relevant as any other Americana. The country considers itself a land of equal opportunity, a great departure from the aristocracies of Europe which this American class system resembled, but now, because of the social evolution of the last two hundred years, having a famous ancestor or two won't get you on a subway, and that also is classic Americana, though the opposite story arc of Horatio Alger and *Roots*. It suggests that it may be time to write about it, that the value of this heritage is in the connection to very important history, that tales which should be told and characters made familiar.

The unique path to these characters and stories is through the genealogy.

My father's family, the Jays, are from the Midwest and not descended from John Jay (people keep asking), though their ancestors come from the same French Huguenot family. But John Jay married Sarah (Sally) Livingston, a member of a political clan that features prominently in these accounts, and he was also a relative of the van Cortlandts and Stuyvesants.

The direct lines to these **founders** all come through my mother's (**Cynthia Jay nee White**) side. The two family charts drawn by her father are in cheap frames, the glass long since broken, but they explain a lot about the way things used to be. Bear with me while I lay out some of the family lines. Or skip this part if it doesn't interest you; the genealogy follows the important early developments and is really only interesting as one of many consequences of these foundings.

At the time he drew these genealogical charts my grandfather, **Lawrence Grant White** was a partner in the architecture firm of McKim, Mead and White (his father **Stanford** had been murdered by Harry K. Thaw more than a decade before).

Near the tops of the nicely bordered pages were the ancestors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, marked with neatly drawn galleons besides the names to indicate an ancestor who arrived by boat. Beside many names were facie (this was drawn before Mussolini appropriated the symbol), indicating that the ancestor was a governor, or a star, indicating a general, or a cross, indicating a clergyman, also various other symbols the meaning of which I can't guess. After working at the NYC office **Poppa** spent some of his evenings alone in New York researching family history at the New York Historical Society, so we can assume that the charts, which he gave as gifts to his descendents for Christmas, 1921, are as accurate as the records that they are based on. In the top branches of the family tree I saw a lot of recognizable names from colonial history, with the facie next to many names, meaning that they were colonial governors. There seemed to be a lot of intermarriage among the descendents of these governors, hence the common ancestry.

One tree was my Grandmother's family: 'Momma', **Laura Chanler White**, grew up in Rokeby, the family estate near Rhinebeck on the Hudson, and on her father's farm in Geneseo, New York, also in Rome, but lived most of her life at Box Hill, on the North Shore of Long Island.

'Momma's father, **Winthrop Chanler**, was a member of the last generation of my antecedents to have unlimited lines of credit. **Winthrop Chanler** married his cousin **Daisy Terry** (author of Roman Spring) and had eight children. Wintie whittled away the family fortune shipping his hunting horses to Ireland and Scotland every hunting season. His great grandfather, **William Backhouse Astor**, the commercial heir of **John Jacob Astor**, had been the richest man in the country by a long shot and had owned one fifth of New York City. The breakup of this empire took place mainly under Wintie and his siblings, known as the Astor orphans, providing some colorful social history for anyone picking

through the wreckage. I intend to do some picking through Chanler history in a second volume, if I ever get this one published.

There are other branches of Astors that I know nothing about, having never actually met an Astor, but I can safely say that there is no inherited wealth coming to anyone I'm related to from the Astor side of our family, and that if there had been, it would be long gone by now anyway. I don't believe a single piece of Manhattan real estate remains in family hands (that's a guess, open to revision).

The 'Astor Orphans' were the many children of **Maddie Ward Chanler** (granddaughter of **William B. Astor**, daughter of **Sam Ward** and **Emily Astor**) and **John Winthrop Chanler** (an heir to Stuyvesant lands in Manhattan). When the parents (**John** and **Maddie**) died, prematurely, of pneumonia, these enriched orphans were nurtured to adulthood by agents of the Astor trusts. The lives these siblings led were, to say the least, interesting. The bonfire of inherited wealth has been covered in books, most notably 'Pride of Lions' by Lately Thomas and 'Archie and Amélie' by Donna M. Lucie.

In a drawn out minuet between prestige and money the Chanler tree traces family lines to many V.I.P.'s of colonial America, including **Peter Styuvesant**, **Roger Williams** (13 times), **John Winthrop**, **John Winthrop Jr.** and **Robert 'first lord' Livingston**.

The other tree was the lineage of **Stanford White**, the architect (father of **Lawrence**, '**Poppa**'), and his wife, nee **Bessie Springs Smith**, whose relatives settled the incorporated township of Smithtown, Long Island. The Smith lines included many Dutch and English leaders, from Van Rensellaers and Van Cortlandts to Woodhulls and including **Capt. Mathias Nicoll**, the second mayor of New York City.

The marriage of **Laura** and **Lawrence**, my maternal grandparents, took place a few years after **Stanford White's** murder, but could be looked at, at the risk of offending Momma and Poppa's children, as another project of the master, a careful piece of social engineering meant to produce generations of socially and culturally prominent aristocrats, inhabiting, illuminating and reproducing within the bamboo walls of Box Hill, never boasting about their famous ancestors. **Stanford** was once at dinner with his son and future daughter-in-law, to whom he paid special attention. When young **Lawrence** expressed a dislike for something, **Stanford** pointed at **Laura Chanler's** belly and said "you like this, don't you?" Those were dynastic instincts at work, but things rarely turn out as planned, especially after the two trials of **Stanford White's** killer brought an ocean of unwanted publicity down on the family, from which it is still drying out. Box Hill is still overrun by **Stanford White's** descendents, at least on holidays, which is a wonderful thing, but no one has political, cultural or financial clout of any kind, that I can see ( this is also open to revision).

The huge manors that were combined through dynastic pairing are, except in rare cases, heavily subdivided. But between the colonial period and the early twentieth century the descendents of the **founders** formed a powerful, mega-

landed, intermarrying, oligarchic, fancy-interiored, powder-wigged top of the food chain, which inhabited beautiful houses, mostly looking west over the Hudson River, a ruling class which has long since dissipated.

*[It still seemed odd that I knew nothing about these **founders**' lives, just their names. Also odd was why my mother's family was descended from all of them, as if some weird application of the anthropic theory was at work, or perhaps something else, something socio-economic. I smelled a book project; if anybody asks what I'm doing, 'writing a book' certainly sounds better than 'worshipping ancestors', and if writing history is something best left to history writers, why should they have all the fun? History usually goes backwards anyway, with the present changing the way events are viewed. If one looks at historical events as alive in this way, always yielding a new angle, a new resonance with the present, the remote past can come much closer.*

*I'm likely to bringing this subject up in conversation, specifically whenever someone asks me what I'm up to, and once I get started, to shut me up people often start telling me their family background. We all have the right to personal identity and pride, wherever we're from, and every story is a cause of which we are the living effect. But the hope here is that I can in the future let this book do the talking, and I can in social settings ask people in turn what they are up to rather than drowning them in colonial history. Another hope I have is that when I run off at the mouth, it's called a lecture on colonial history and I am paid for it.*

*I don't remember a single instance while growing up when the distant ancestors were discussed, except as names, by which I mean that their names were and are used to glorify the living, not the dead. When somebody says 'we're descended from **Roger Williams** thirteen times' the message is about 'we', not **Roger Williams**. Any detail about **Roger Williams** the man is strangely superfluous to the main point of the statement, which is either an expression of pride or status-grubbing, depending. That's not fair, either to these founders or to their great accomplishments. The object of this book is in part to put the glory and attention back where it belongs, on the original founders (I'll get back to them in a minute). It has been a series of revelations, both in terms of distant family history and the infinitely grander issues of individual liberty and church/state relations.]*

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The **founders** actually founded and wrote the laws of their respective domains. That was their business. Most of these original colonies started as licensed corporations as well as congregations. The corporate structure, with board members and stockholders, a treasurer, a chairman (governor) remained almost intact through all the mutations of the self-governing systems that evolved, and were the basis of the bicameral system of popular government devised by **John Winthrop** and his colleagues. **Winthrop** and **Williams** founded their cities with a determination to transform a sinful world; they wanted

the dais and the pulpit, to orate to both the arrogant and the miserable on both sides of the ocean, and each other, on how it should be done and where-in lies hypocrisy. Now everywhere you look the judicial democracy and religious freedom that these two men spearheaded form the principles of choice to manage complex societies, barely beating out Marxist-Leninism, Maoism, dynastic Stalinism, monarchy, national socialism, military dictatorship, theocracy and now, an ongoing struggle, Islamic Fascism, which is also known as anti-Americanism.

These were the founders of settlements that became cities: Plymouth, Boston, Providence, New York, Albany and, a century and a half later, Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia River, the first American settlement on the Pacific coast, also many other towns and colonies (Ipswich, New London, Saybrook, Smithtown, L.I. Islip, Carlisle Pa....), also the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York. The **founders** often knew each other, wrote to each other constantly, fighting over state borders, puritan doctrine and sovereignty, giving each other advice and rebuke.

*The influence of the Puritans on our way of life cannot be overstated. There is the empirical mindset that is still in our foreign policy, and the Bush family has stuck to another one as well: according to Puritan custom, if a member of a congregation was a governor, or a carpenter, or even a minister, more than likely the eldest son would be one too. President George W. Bush (a descendent of **Winthrop** and **Livingston**, and probably a few other **founders**) follows, according to Puritan custom, his father's footsteps. This was related to predestination and other puritan beliefs, since the Puritans believed that the social order was God's map of who was saved and who was condemned to the eternal fires of hell. This allowed the descendents of the founders to establish political dynasties and become a landed aristocracy, since a dynasty of governors, a natural consequence of predestination, always needed another dynasty of governors to marry into. There are other similarities between the current president and the Puritans, which didn't hurt in Geo. W. Bush's political campaigns. One is the supportive roll played by Laura Bush, which echoes a very Puritan dynamic. Also the Bible seems to have retained its status as a political document.*

Puritan Boston was the great hope for mankind. The 'city on a hill' was supposed to be a cross between heaven and earth, at least in the eyes of its founding clerics and magistrates, and few moral or spiritual compromises were tolerated. Religious argument was the stuff of life and you lived it, every meeting of the general council argued about something religious. **John Winthrop** thought that people would naturally conform to godly behavior, that it didn't have to be legislated, but it did.

In Providence, the antithesis of Boston, 'liberty of conscience' was the new idea. You could think and practice whatever you want within the confines of civil

laws. **Roger Williams'** arguments have endured, even when they directly contradicted the equally enduring **Winthrop** positions. No likeness of **Williams** was made in his lifetime, and he died a citizen of his own state of Rhode Island, a member of no church, impoverished by his political efforts. His political philosophy, once considered seditious and radical, is now practically the default mode around the world, and is still remains seditious and radical to religious hardliners, the first to benefit from his liberty of conscience. The Baptist Church he founded (and abandoned) may be the most popular religion in this country, so why didn't I know anything about him? As chief architect of our everyday reality, I guess he can be forgotten, his job finished, but I hear very few of **Roger William's** arguments being made, especially in the courts on the issue of separation of church and state.

**John Jacob Astor** is also remembered as a name but forgotten as an individual. Like the other founders, **John Jacob Astor** was not an aristocrat (more of a plutocrat). Among his many accomplishments, **Astor** built through his agents Astoria, at the mouth of the Columbia River, our country's first settlement on the Pacific coast; if not for him Washington and Oregon would be part of Canada. He also opened up commerce with Alaska and Russia. His first business was importing musical instruments, but after taking over the fur business, he traded in arms, opium, tea, and, after losing his west coast empire, accumulated large amounts of New York real estate.

I had barely heard of **John Winthrop Jr.**, **Robert (First Lord) Livingston** or **Kiliean Van Rensselaer**, and was not aware that they were ancestors. These people are certainly worth knowing about; they had no one above them telling them what to do, neither the States General, nor the British Crown, nor later the English Governor Generals. They were warlords in fine clothes, with gracious manners, the most powerful European-born political figures this side of Europe (**Kiliean Van Rensselaer** wielded his power from Amsterdam, never leaving port, in the same way that **Astor** held control over the Pacific Coast having long since abandoned the hardships of frontier life. **Robert Livingston** had fine clothes, but has never been described as gracious.)

In New England, a civic government had to be set up for every new settlement, and every new settlement rapidly grew into a teeming city filled to overflowing with European migrants. Many missed old England, many (**Roger Williams, John Winthrop Jr., Robert Livingston**) went back and forth, seeking charters and skilled tradesmen and investors for their colonies and continued contact with the homeland, the source of their private funding and the market for their furs. To a migrant standing on the New England shore, one sail on the horizon meant, hopefully, new settlers, provisions, letters from the ones that stayed home, also pots, pans knives, beads, buttons, guns and blankets for the Indian trade. Four sails bearing down from any easterly direction meant a regime change.

There are countless other dynastic founders, Lion Gardiner and John Underhill, both military men who were early settlers of Long Island, and many, many Dutch, English, French and Spanish adventurers of the same stripe, not to mention the founders of settlements and states throughout the rest of the continent, and these names that are today's subjects are here only because of the genealogy, making this a rather arbitrary collection that should include hundreds more founders that I'm not kin to. Still, these [names represent a political elite that had enough power at the right time in history to create both a ruling class and a populist system of government.

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But there are two threads here, the dynastic and the democratic. Back then dynastic people often married for love, specifically love of money and land. As it happens, there was a lot of land to love. A match among the descendents of these founders often involved a growing real estate empire, which in turn involved a feudal relationship with tenant farmers. By the time of the American Revolution, this class was already losing power, marrying cousins, clinging on to manors that stretched as far as the eye can see from the top of a manor tower. But they were also deeply involved in the creation of the country, as military leaders, jurists, merchants and politicians, pirates and robber barons. Their political power, though considerable, became limited by the kind of representative democracies that took root in the seventeenth century meeting houses. When Livingston Manor was broken up after the Rent Wars, that spelled the alleged end to feudalism in America. The lords of the manor have now been replaced by credit card companies and mortgage lenders. But for hundreds of years this vague collection of famous last names (there are hundreds of last names associated with this old class, but of course I'm only interested in the ones I'm related to) was used for social coinage, appearing often in the succeeding generations as first and middle names. Meanwhile the original founders, who were not aristocrats, are paid no attention at all.

By now the old money is so old it's gone, and the houses are like huge dysfunctional children, beautiful and grand and requiring heroic expenditures to keep from falling down. There's plenty of residue of the old glory in the personalities of my relatives, each of whom is, in my objective opinion, a living treasure, but they are no longer aristocrats, unless they happen to favor an aristocratic type government, for whatever reason. It is possible that some do, since I can't speak for everybody. My Uncle Bobby White once confessed, after some badgering on my part, to being a monarchist.

Unless it's describing a nose, the word 'aristocrat' usually has a negative connotation, since aristocrats have been known to exploit and bully and condescend to. **Robert 'First Lord' Livingston** started a political party in New York called the Aristocrats, which was specifically to stop a populist leader, Jacob Leisler, a rich Dutch Reform minister, from ruling over the self-proclaimed elite. The outcome of this political confrontation was **Livingston**, the inevitable victor,

witnessing Leisler's public beheading.

Many of the descendents still have English accents, for example Eleanor Roosevelt or former Governor Thomas Kean of New Jersey, both descendents of **Robert 'First Lord' Livingston** (I can't even imitate this accent, though my mother speaks with it). **Livingston** was first and foremost an opportunist, not someone who cared about civil rights, but meanwhile, the emergence of a kind of meritocracy speaks well for the great body of equalizing legislation that began with **John Winthrop**, who did care about civil rights, as did Eleanor Roosevelt and Mr. Keane.

Many Livingstons had a hand in writing the laws of the land. Philip Livingston and Robert 'the Chancellor' Livingston and William Livingston (father-in-law of John Jay) were right there at the birth of our country, helping to write major documents like the Declaration and the Constitution, also John Jay, who married into the Livingston clan, and Lewis Livingston who moved to New Orleans and wrote the legal code for Louisiana in which the Napoleonic Code was merged with the U.S. Constitution. This basis of government spread to the Caribbean and South America.

**John Winthrop** was adamant that peer privilege in England would not translate to the other side of the Atlantic. He sent his eldest son and factotum **John Winthrop Jr.** (also a European born colonial governor and founder of a dynasty, starring in his own chapter) to Ireland, Scotland and London with a real estate pitch to the rich Lords and Ladies, come to Boston and achieve human perfection. But there was a caveat: peer privilege would not be allowed the New Jerusalem; they would have the same legal rights as anyone else, including natives and freed slaves, in the Community of Saints. Some Lords went so far as to send servants across to build manor houses, but in the end they decided being a commoner under a civilian government wasn't that appealing. So they stayed home or went to Virginia. That left the descendents of the governors room at the top.

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Many historical turning points involve a collection of these **founders** in key, often opposing roles. Unlike in a chronological history, this interweaving of lives requires looking at the same event from different perspectives in different chapters. Such an event was the meeting at Sempringham Castle in 1629. Another took place in May, 1665, when a British squadron under Col. Richard Nichols arrived at the great harbor off of New Amsterdam and claimed the Dutch province in the name of James, Duke of York and Albany, the Catholic convert who would soon to be, briefly, James the Second of England. Dutch and English ancestors were in the room of the waterfront tavern where the terms of surrender were presented: **Gov. John Winthrop Jr.**, **Gov. Peter Stuyvesant**, **Patroon Jeremias van Rensselaer**, and **Oloff Van Cortland**, representing the waterfront

trade. The result of their negotiations was British control over the entire coast, from Maine to Georgia, the original thirteen states of what was to become the United States of America.

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## **WOMEN**

Since these **founders** are all male, I must ask myself (I was married to a feminist once) what was the role of women in all this? To what extent did they influence who married whom? Possibly the women were under more pressure socially, ensuring that no Catholics snuck into the family tree, (oops, great grandmother Daisy Terry Chanler converted, while living in Rome, which is why we all grew up Roman Catholic) finding new sources of wealth to marry into; grim responsibilities for the great matriarchs.

Women of course also founded these dynasties. Many of these **founders** succeeded only because they established a strong bond with a life partner who was an intellectual equal. **John and Margaret (his third wife) Winthrop, Roger and Mary (Barnard) Williams, Jeremias and Maria (Van Cortlandt) Van Rensselaer, Peter and Jane (Bayard) Stuyvesant, Robert and Alida (Schuyler) Livingston, John Jacob and Sarah (Todd) Astor**; they were all domestic and business partners. Typically the women would stay home, keep books, place orders, take orders, the managing partner in the relationship, while the men voyaged off to the wilderness and to the business centers and political hotspots in Europe, trading and conniving their ways into power and fortune. **Maria (van Cortlandt) Van Rensselaer and Alida (Schuyler) Livingston** were hands-on bosses of their vast manors. **John Winthrop Jr.** would bring his family with him when he founded a town from scratch. (His first wife died in Ipswich, Ma. before the town was anything more than a wilderness camp.)

Nobody got anywhere without winning over the local sachems of the Indian nations. The natives trapped the woodland critters and tore off their pelts and ambitious traders would barter vigorously for these pelts (one rifle = twenty beaver pelts) and sell them at a 600% markup on the international market. This was the main business and exchange rate in North America for over three hundred years. Most of these **Founders** were involved in the fur trade, meaning they were in with the Sachems.

One thing the Dutch had in common with the puritans, as well as most Europeans and Russians, was big hats, high and wide, and the process by which these hats were made, starting with beaver pelts from which the felt under the fur was removed, was the major industry of the time. A man without a hat was not a man, and a man without cash and land was not a gentleman, so it helped to have all three, and in the primeval stretches of New England, the best, almost the only way, to acquire these things was to trade beaver. Nobody traded more beaver than **Kiliaen van Rensselaer, Oloff Van Cortland, Robert Livingston and John Jacob Astor**. Even **Roger Williams** had a trading post.

Another mystery to solve: in the family trees drawn up by my grandfather **Lawrence Grant White**, all the heraldic shields of these dynasties are displayed across the top of the page, and none of them contain a beaver. Stags, falcons, griffins, rabbits, even a dog chasing a rabbit (**Stuyvesant**) but no beaver.

There is a beaver on the seal of New York State, however, and **John Jacob Astor** named his flagship 'the Beaver', so the poor hunted critter was represented.

## RIVERS

Most of these settlements were founded at the mouth of a great river, whether it was the Charles, the Thames, the Connecticut, the Hudson, the Mississippi or the Columbia. From these valuable spots one could control commerce into the interior, which meant the beaver business. From the beginning of European interest in the New World the game was on to control the immensely profitable peltry trade. The beaver disappeared very quickly from Massachusetts, and the Hudson and Connecticut rivers became desirable to both the English and the Dutch. On learning that the Pilgrims were headed for the mouth of the Hudson, the Dutch sabotaged their expedition by over-rigging their ship. **John Winthrop Jr.** hired Lion Gardiner to build a fort at the mouth of the Connecticut River, to the consternation of the Dutch who had a fort near the site of where Hartford is now. **Winthrop** also founded New London at the mouth of the Thames (he did not name the town, leaving that task to the hopeful migrants drawn to the settlements he founded). **John Jacob Astor** tried to buy the Louisiana territories from Napoleon, in order to control the fur trade on the Mississippi. When that failed he founded a settlement at the mouth of the Columbia, the first U.S. settlement on the west coast. The watershed of the mighty Columbia was to have been his empire, a separate country from the United States but he lost Astoria to the British in the War of 1812.

## PARTIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Recently published books that relate to these subjects are Francis Bremer's "John Winthrop, America's Forgotten Founding Father", "The Puritan Experiment" also by Bremer, Clare Brandt's "An American Aristocracy, the Livingstons", Russell Shorto's "The Island at the Center of the World", "The Hudson, a History" by Tom Lewis and, hardly recent, Washington Irving's amazing volumes on Astoria. Now I'm reading John Fiske 1899 books on the English French and Dutch colonies, and the great Diedrich Knickerbocker's history of New York, also by Washington Irving, which will be quoted, also 'the History of the City of Albany', by Arthur James Weiss, 1886, that cost me a steep \$70. at the used book store. I found 'The Younger John Winthrop' by Robert C. Black III in the index of Russell Shorto's book, and subsequently on the internet, and I have just visited Providence with my daughter to vanquish our ignorance of **Roger Williams** and the vital part he played in the formation of the American

character and political ideology. We were startled to find that it all basically came out of **Roger William's** head, which, if the statue overlooking Providence is any indication, was as big as a house. One of the greatest books I ever opened is '1. Roger Williams' by Mary Lee Settle, which paints a vivid and poetic picture of English life and politics before Oliver Cromwell, and **Roger Williams'** active roll as the young secretary to Sir Edward Coke, England's top jurist. Also, I have just read Nathaniel Philbrick's 'Mayflower', which covers the Plymouth colony's beginnings and descent from amity to war with the local populations after the death of **William Bradford**.

I recently purchased Evan Pritchard's 'Natives of New York' which gives a comprehensive account of the native populations before during and after their decimation and dissimulation as victims of this founding process that created our country. He is the only one of these writers that I have actually communicated with (one e-mail exchange) but while this book covers about 250 years, his covers 10,000 years. The two projects meet and intersect at many points, seeing the same events from the opposite sides of time. His accounts look at a painful holocaust from the distant past, mine look back at the founding of America from the future of the events. I'm looking at the beginning, he's looking at the end.

Family lore, the stories of Uncle Peter, only seems to go back a few generations, though I just heard from my mother the story of Chief Wyandanch's daughter, other than that none of the information in this volume came from family sources. It comes from old history books, some primary sources, and some subconscious digestion of events and personalities.

# THE FOUNDERS

## Chapter Summaries

### 1. THE PATROONS: **Kiliaen van Rensselaer**

Lord Kiliaen was a rich diamond merchant, founded the original colony and town of Albany (then Beverwyck) on the manor of Rensselaerswyck, as his private kingdom, traded and made original treaties with the Mohawk and other Iroquois nations. This was all done through his agents such as **Brandt Aren Van Slechtenhorst** and Adrien Vander Donck, since he never left Amsterdam. The history of Albany, a major commercial and strategic hub, can be told from the point of view of the van Rensselaers and the Schuylers and little would be left out.

Also: Nicholas, Johannes, **Jeremias Van Rensselaer**

### 2. COMMISSIONER: **Oloff Van Cortland**

He controlled the waterfront of New Amsterdam, as Commissioner of Cargoes and Stores. Much of the profits from fur trading which should have gone to the West Indies Company found their way into the Van Cortlandt family vaults. Holding many official posts, he helped determine the future of New Amsterdam.

Also: Van Cortlandts, **Maria van Rensselaer**

### 3. GENERAL: **Peter Stuyvesant**

The appointed director-general of New Netherlands was an autocrat and bully who turned New Amsterdam from a ramshackle outpost of the Dutch West Indies Company into a major port city. Skillfully avoiding war with the English colonials, he eventually was forced, in a bloodless confrontation, to cede Manhattan and the Hudson valley to the British. He was a victim of his own success.

### 4. SEMPRINGHAM **John Winthrop**

As a devout Puritan preacher in East Anglia, Winthrop was conflicted, between faith and secular responsibilities, between faith and death, between faith and worldly goods, between salt and pepper. This made him a natural leader of the Massachusetts colonies, since these conflicts only resolve in a Godly utopia, and the rugged shores of New England were a Godly Utopian's dream. Massachusetts was a laboratory of government science, of public ethics, individual responsibilities, crisis management, all the problems that eventually found some kind of resolution in a representative democracy.

#### 5. LIBERAL PURITAN: **Roger Williams**

Intense and uncompromising, this brilliant cleric was kicked out of every colony in Massachusetts, eventually settling on the shores of the Narraganset to found his own utopia, based on 'liberty of conscience'. As an activist cleric, his main concern was the rights of individuals to worship as they saw fit, and to protect those rights from legislators. **John Winthrop** took the opposite view, that legislation should be protected from activist clerics. These were two sides of the same coin, driving a permanent wedge between church and state.

#### 6. THE VIRGIN WIDOW: **Robert & Alida Livingston**

Son of a fiery Scottish Puritan preacher, **Livingston** was raised in Rotterdam, from there making his way to Albany. Using his Dutch education to his advantage, he would soon be established as secretary to the patroon, chief ambassador to the Iroquois nations and husband of **Alida Schuyler**, the young widow of patroon Nicholas van Rensselaer. As a leading citizen of Albany and New York, he wrested a baronial grant from the British Governor General for a stretch of land between the Hudson River and Massachusetts. By the second generation the Livingstons held over two million acres of land.

Also: Robert 'the Chancellor' Livingston, Beekmans,

#### 7. JUNIOR: **John Winthrop Jr.**

The most skillful politician of his time and place, the map of the New England states, the State of Connecticut and the peaceful British takeover of New Netherlands are in large part his masterpieces. He was the only American and the only head of state to be an original fellow in the Royal Society, the only medical man in Connecticut, and as the long-time governor of Connecticut his letters resigning that office were automatically refused.

#### 8. **William Bradford,**

#### 9. THE BULL RIDER:

**Richard 'Bull' Smith**: founded Smithtown, Long Island when Lion Gardiner was offered land by the chief Wyndanch for saving his daughter's life. Gardiner told the chief that he already had all the land he needed, but maybe the favor could be passed along to his friend Smith, who in turn made a deal for all the land he could ride a bull around in one day.

Also: **Mathias Nicolls,**

#### 10. KING OF THE WILD FRONTIER: **John Jacob Astor**

**Astor** arrived in New York from Germany with a handful of flutes. Soon after breaking into the fur trade he became its leading player. He tried to buy the Louisiana Territories from Napoleon, and when that failed he settled for control of

the Columbia River, the North West territories and the China trade.  
Also: **William Backhouse Astor**

## **VOL 2:**

### **11. GENERALS: **Armstrongs**.**

As secretary of war in the War of 1812, General John Armstrong was blamed for allowing the British to burn Washington.

### **12. MORE GENERALS: General Francis Marion, 'The Swamp Fox' also William Floyd, **Nathaniel Woodhull**, President of the Provincial Congress**

### **13. KING OF THE LOBBY: 'Uncle' **Sam Ward**:**

Son of a prosperous N.Y.C. banker, he graduated from Columbia University at 16 years of age, a record at the time. His contributions to mathematics and linguistics didn't hold him back from his eventual careers as, among other things, the husband of the beautiful daughter of the richest man in the country. Emily Astor was the daughter of William Backhouse Astor and Margaret Armstrong, and after Emily Astor died 'Uncle Sam' went through a roller-coaster ride of careers, making and losing fortunes, always with immense style and wit, always at alienation-level odds with the Astor family, finding eventual fame as a lobbyist in Washington D.C. Maddie Ward Chanler being the daughter who married John Winthrop Chanler. In Sam Ward's house on the corner of Bond Street and Broadway was the country's first art gallery.

### **14. FROM MOULDERING TO JUBILATION: **Julia Ward Howe (Sam Ward's sister)****

Riding a carriage through the muddy streets of Washington D.C. during the Civil War, past groups of wounded, demoralized Union troops huddled against the cold drizzle. Later outside her hotel window she hears a company of soldiers march by singing "John Brown's Body Lies A-Moulderin' in the Grave, but his Soul Goes Marching On" .. a depressing march if ever there was one. She wakes in the middle of the night and writes the words to the 'Battle Hymn of the Republic', which soon replaces "John Brown's Body" as the marching song (same tune) among the entire Union Army, revitalizing and glorifying the War effort. The Union eventually goes on to win the war.

To this day in many parts of the South, if the 'Battle Hymn of the Republic' is played for whatever reason, a certain number of people will stand up and walk out of the room.

15. PRIDE OF LIONS The **Astor Orphans**

They were millionaires, aristocrats, loose canons with the world at their command, reared by trustees of Morris and McVey, managers of the Astor trusts. Eccentricity breeds anecdotes, and there are plenty here, including deep involvement in the Spanish-American War, in the First World War, private armies, private warships, insane asylums. Many books have been written about these characters. My great grandfather was Winthrop Chanler, the second oldest.

16. ELECTRIC SKIES: **Stanford White** and Nicola Tesla

Another near success of a staggeringly ambitious project. With the backing of J.P. Morgan, Stanford White and Nicola Tesla built a laboratory/power station in Shoreham, on the North Shore of Long Island, that by design was to provide free power without wires, bouncing electrical energy off the ionosphere. They were on the verge of success, flipping the switch as it were, when Morgan pulled the plug. The great financier did not explain the decision to the suddenly impoverished geniuses he had backed, but complained to a business partner that anyone with an antenna would be able to milk his cow for free, meaning that Con Ed bills would not exist as we know them. (Morgan was also a backer of Edison, which may have played into the decision.) This was not an experiment but an engineering project, since Tesla's insight into the behavior of electricity at extreme frequencies levels convinced him and everybody around him, including Morgan, that his great copper disk on top of White's building would behave as advertised.

17. More **Stanford White, Bessie Smith, Daisy Terry Chanler, Louisa Ward Crawford Terry, Lawrence Grant White, Laura Astor Chanler White.**

## THE PATROONS

The burgers of New Amsterdam, early seventeenth, were wary of going up river, frightened by reports of tempests and cannibals, hobgoblins, whirlwinds on the Tappan Zee and other terrors. Fort Orange, at the present site of Albany, represented the highest point visited by Henry Hudson, and received only the most determined fur traders as visitors. This would become the settlement of Rensselaerswyck, the first and largest Manor of the Dutch colonial period. Its story of adventure and conflict starts with **Kiliaen van Rensselaer**, a rich and notable Amsterdam diamond and pearl merchant. Though you wouldn't know this from looking at Albany today, the colony was his private duchy or fiefdom and all residents were required to swear allegiance to van Rensselaer and his heirs.

**Kiliaen** never took the risky and uncomfortable voyage across the Atlantic preferring to rule from his luxurious office in Amsterdam. Research does tell us that Wouten Van Twiller's only qualification for the office of Director-General of New Netherlands was his marriage to **Kiliaen's** niece.

The Dutch usually set off for New Netherlands by way of the West Indies, riding prevailing southerlies up the coast. (The English preferred braving the storms of the North Atlantic.) **Kiliaen's** expedition passed a few weeks in New Amsterdam, recruiting colonists for the new manor, and set off up the great river to establish a colony and also a monopoly on the fur business. Before leaving the **van Rensselear** party made clear to the government of the city, in the person of Walter the Doubter (Van Twiller), that they owed allegiance only to **Lord Kiliaen** and the States General, not to the colonial authorities or the Dutch West Indies Company, regardless of the fact that their boss was one of the founders and directors of that enterprise.

**Kiliaen** was also a member of the powerful Amsterdam Chamber of Deputies, and it must be mentioned that the Greater Netherlands was the richest country in the world at the time. Most of the land in what is now Albany and Rensselaer counties he bought, through his agents off the Mohawks and Mohicans, about 700,000 acres, and he was able to send from Holland farmers and tradesmen to settle Rensselaerswick, which is the name of the entire manor, and Beverswyck, now Albany, it's thriving business center. Though the Company owned and maintained Fort Orange, **van Rensselaer** owned the town itself and all the land for twenty six by forty one miles, on both sides of the Hudson. His position was indistinguishable from that of a medieval king, ruling his fiefdom from a luxurious house in Amsterdam and leaving the governing of the manor to directors, magistrates and sheriffs.

He hired a gifted young law-school graduate, Adriaen van der Donck to be the first sheriff of the manor (to replace Van Curler?).

The industry was fur-trading, and whoever made an alliance with the militant branch of the Five Nations of the Iroquois, the Mohawk, would wield international commercial power. If the Mohawks traded furs for guns, exclusively with agents of **Lord Kiliaen**, the armed and mobile tribe would make a powerful ally. The colony wouldn't have to worry about the Algonquin to the south and east, or the French to the north who were aligned with the fierce Huron nation, or the traditional enemies of the Mohawk, the Mohicans to the east.

**Van Rensselaer** shipped livestock from Holland at great expense and built strong houses for the settlers, since the point of a manor was to attract as many settlers as possible, without mentioning that they would be tenant farmers, basically serfs, for many generations. The fur trade was ostensibly the domain of the Dutch West Indies Company, but **Lord Kiliaen** practiced it independently and many settlers practiced it independently of him. Smuggling and illicit trade were dangerously diluting the rich peltrie business, robbing of profits both the Patroon and the Company, which never saw a profit.

Since the primeval forests were dangerous, all travel and commerce were done along the waterways, and by that logic, those who controlled the waterways controlled the commerce. With this in mind **Kiliaen** sent his master-at-arms to Bear Island, eleven miles south of Albany, to take possession and build a fortress commanding the river with two cannon. The fortress dubbed 'Rensselaerstein', was primarily to control the smuggling of furs, but it meant that every vessel going up or down the Hudson had to salute **Kiliaen van Rensselaer**, submit to a search and pay a five guilder toll.

**Wooten van Twiller** wrote an angry letter to Amsterdam asking by what right **van Rensselaer** had taken the island that did not belong to him. He replied 'By right of arms', or in literal translation 'By weapon right'.

One yacht descending the river from Fort Orange passed Bear Island and was greeted by a blast of gunpowder from the fort. Someone on the ramparts shouted "Strike thy colors!", and the yachtsman replied "for whom shall I strike?". "For **Lord Kiliaen** and the staple right of Rensselaerstein!"

The sailor, **Govert Lookermans**, answered "I strike for no one but the Prince of Orange and their High Mightinesses the States General!". Rensselaer's master at arms then fired on the boat, knocking out some rigging and causing a fuss in New Amsterdam, since staple right could only be claimed by the Company. It meant whoever held it could tax the cargo or buy it.

**Govert Lookermans** was the brother of **Ann Lookermans**, wife of **Oloff Van Cortlandt**, who at the time was Commissioner of Stores & Cargoes, the waterfront chief of New Amsterdam. **Van Cortlandt** and **Lookermans** were as determined fortune hunters as anyone in that town of hustlers, and were in powerful positions to profit from both licit and illicit trade in pelts, and it is very likely that the fort was built precisely to contain their relentless profiteering.

Lookermans would soon become the richest man in New Amsterdam, with **Van Cortlandt** a close second.

To close this tight circle of dynastic activity, **Van Cortlandt's** daughter **Maria** married **Jeremias Van Rensselear** and took control of the affairs of the manor after **Jeremias'** death. She was injured in the birth of her last daughter and spent a long widowhood limping about on crutches and determining the fate of Rensselaerswyck.(more on **Maria** later)

Kiliaen's sons Johan Baptiste, **Jeremias** and Rev. Nicolaas were successively patroons of Rensselaerswyck. Van Rensselaers would still hold the this office at least one hundred and twenty years after the founding of the manor. Adrien van der Donck, the original jonker that the name Yonkers is derived from (jonker means a young Dutch gentleman) was hired by **van Rensselaer** back in Amsterdam to be the first attorney general (schott?) of the Manor.

**Kiliaen** died about the time **Peter Stuyvesant** came to power, and the new Director spent no time showing the wayward kingdom who was boss. **Stuyvesant** sailed up from Manhattan to restore sovereignty on behalf of the Company. He was greeted with canons firing and the townspeople out in force. The Director gave a series of directives, some orders concerning the area around the fort being clear of residential housing, for sound military reasons. But he was ignored, in fact the director of Rensselaerswick, **Brandt Aren van Slechtenhorst**, a short feisty man bristling with weapons, marched down to the pier followed by a double column of black deputies, also armed. **Stuyvesant** ordered his troops back on board the wide-hulled sloop and sailed back to Manhattan.

Not long after, his troops showed up in Albany fully intending to restore order according to the new Director. **Stuyvesant's** directives would be ignored at great peril, but **van Slechtenhorst** was convinced that the inhabitants of Rensselaerswyck were not subjects of the West Indies Company but of Lord Kiliaen's heirs. He ignored, countermanded or protested all of **Stuyvesant's** orders, no matter how benign.

This created, or stemmed from, an animosity between the garrisoned troops, now called 'Wooden Leg's Dogs', and the people of the town. More than once the guns of the fort were loaded and trained on the Patroon's house, where **van Slechtenhorst** lived. The embittered soldiers, under Commander Johannes Dyckman, were staunchly loyal to Stuyvesant and conversely **Van Slechtenhorst** was willing to die defending the independence of Rensselearswyck. Incidents of tension and physical confrontations were common, one involved the soldiers beating **Van Slechtenhorst's** son black and blue, and when Philip Pietersen Schuyler tried to rescue his brother in law, Dyckman pulled his sword and threatened to run him through.

The Company, in the person of **Stuyvesant**, claimed all the land within a canon shot of the fort, and no matter how they made this claim, the authorities of Rensselearswyck refused to recognize it. Eventually **Stuyvesant** had to sail up

the Hudson again with a troop of guards to set things right, ordering Dyckman to erect a gallows on which **Van Slechtenhorst**, Johan Baptiste van Rensselaer and others would pay the price for their disregard of **Stuyvesant's** directives. The furious Director General arrested **Van Slechtenhorst** at gun-point and imprisoned him on Manhattan. He escaped before he could be tried, and returned to the manor secreted in the hold of a sloop. There he convinced the prominent townsfolk to swear allegiance to the heirs of **Lord Kiliaen**.

**Van Slechtenhorst's** daughter, **Margritta**, wrote him a tribute:

I'm young Margarita van Schlectenhorst,  
My father's the master we call him Baas,  
Of de Heer van Rensselaer's Bouwerie  
This brought us here from the Zuider Zee

My mother is dead, and I'm all alone  
To care for my father's simple home.  
But I try to do it as well as can be,  
Though I long for my home by the Zuider Zee.

My father's a man who knows so much.  
Though you'd not understand his Holland Dutch  
He's not handsome and yet you know  
He's brave and kind and I love him so.

**Margritta** married **Philip Pietersen Schuyler** in the town, and the wedding was witnessed by a large assemblage of magistrates and notables. Their children featured prominently in the next chapters of Albany history. One was **Alida Schuyler**, who at eighteen married Rev. Nicolaas van Rensselaer and when he died, mysteriously, in testate, she married the patroon's secretary, **Robert Livingston**, and started a dynasty (this is covered in 'The Virgin Widow'). **Alida's** brother, Peter Schuyler, was Mayor of Albany under three different English governors and as Major Schuyler, commanded the forces that routed the French and Hurons who constantly threatened to attack Albany. The early history of Albany could be told from the point of view of either the Rensselaer or Schuyler or Livingston families without leaving much out.

Eventually, in spite of furious protests, the colony submitted to virtually all the directives of 'Old Wooden Leg', paying taxes on beer, moving the houses from around Fort Orange at their own expense, etc. Part of the collection of taxes and fines went to improving the town.

In 1658 alone, 37,640 beaver skins and 300 otter skins were shipped from Fort Orange and Rensselaerswyck, according to the records of excise taxes

collected by the Company. At this time any Indian carrying a beaver skin through the woods would quickly be surrounded by 'wood runners', unscrupulous brokers of peltries, all competing for the pelt with threats and promises. The sachems protested bitterly.

Throughout the history of Rensselaerswyck tensions between the tiny garrison stationed at Fort Orange, representing the Company and later the English Crown, and the residents of the town and surrounding land never really subsided. The soldiers who were ostensibly protecting the settlers from invasions from the north, east and west were not victualized nor allowed to hunt the forests of Rensselaerswyck. This situation lasted as long as the manor existed as a legal entity, coming to a head in 1704 when **Robert Livingston** refused the military protection of Jacob Liesler's troops. The French and Hurons sacked Schenectady and massacred its inhabitants, but were chased off by forces commanded by **Livingston**, FitzJohn Winthrop (eldest son of **John Winthrop Jr.**) and Major Peter Schuyler (brother of **Alida Schuyler**).

**Kiliaen's** third son **Jeremias van Rensselaer** became the third patroon of Rensselaerwyck in 1658. Along with Pieter Schuyler he set out on horseback to the towns of the Mohawk and established treaties that strengthened the military alliance against the French and English. It also, as per the request of the Mohawk sachems, promised not to sell them brandy. As director of the oldest Dutch colony in New Netherland, **Jeremias** was chosen to preside over the General Assembly of 1664, in New Amsterdam, and in a sagacious reversal of his political habits, **Stuyvesant** subscribed to the rulings of the assembly and ordered their implementation. They recommended treaties with the river Indians, in spite of a recent massacre, and appeasement of the powerful English colonists on Long Island who were under the protection of **Gov. John Winthrop Jr.** in Hartford. The story of the English annexation of New Netherland can be told in four different chapters of this book, since most the principals, excepting Col. Richard Nichols, the commander of the British Squadron, figure in this ancestry: **Jeremias van Rensselaer**, as president of the General Assembly; **Oloff Van Cortlandt** representing the merchants and waterfront trade; **Peter Stuyvesant**, as Director General who ultimately had to sign the articles of surrender, and **John Winthrop Jr.**, the main architect of the British takeover, who represented the colonies that were about to be united, from Maine to South Carolina, under the English flag. The details of this tectonic moment in history should by rights belong to the chapter on **Stuyvesant**, since it took place in his city, on his watch, but also it was all instigated by **John Winthrop Jr.**, who held a patent that included most of New Netherlands as part of Connecticut.

The new boss was James, Duke of York and Albany, (later King James II), who obtained from his brother Charles II a competing patent for New Netherlands and Long Island and including Connecticut as far east as the Connecticut River. The formerly Dutch cities took on the respective names of their patron. In 1678 Governor Andros was instructed by the Duke to give the heirs of **Kiliaen van**

**Rensselaer** their own patent, or baronial grant for the manor of Rensselaerswyck.

In 1686 the van Rensselaers relinquished their patent on the town and Albany was incorporated as a city. Governor Dongan named Peter Schyuler Mayor and **Robert Livingston**, recently arrived, as town-clerk, and also as clerk to the board of Indian Commissioners. Rensselaerswyck had a Van Rensselaer patrol as late as 1768, one hundred and thirty odd years after the original settlement was founded, though I am not sure what the manor consisted of by that time.

## TWO

### OLOFF THE DREAMER

In keeping with the theme of this book, founders of early American fortunes, cities and dynasties, I have to include **Oloff Van Cortland**, since he fits the general parameters and he is an ancestor. Looking in the usual histories of Manhattan my investigations coming up dry so I went to the ultimate source of all human knowledge, 'Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York'. There in Knickerbocker relates the story of **Oloff** the Dreamer, in which a brave party of Dutch adventurers settles on the beaches of Pavonia. They are not quite satisfied with the mosquito infested site, and **Oloff** takes it on himself to mount an expedition to explore the great harbor and its estuaries. Setting off in the longboat of their original transport, the Good Wife, and a few canoes, they embark up the East River and through the conflagration of Hell's Gate where the expedition is nearly lost. On the turning of the tide they head for home but a storm washes them ashore on the tip of Manhattan Island. There they enjoy a feast of roast oysters, smoke some pipes and fall asleep. **Oloff Van Cortland** dreams he is visited by St. Nicholas, and then he dreams of a great city, and on awakening, declares this the site of the new settlement.

On reading this I grew more and more excited, since this fit the profile of the other founders, **Winthrop, Williams, van Rensselaer** etc., making a neat package tied with the ribbon of the founder of New York City, the greatest city in the world. Just to be sure of the facts, even though Knickerbocker is the ultimate authority and history should justly conform to what he says it is, I had to research further. I knew Washington Irving had spent many daylight hours in the library of the New York Historical Society, so there I went on a sunny day, in greater need of answers than a tan.

It turns out that the trip through Hell's Gate attributed to Van Cortland was made by Adrien Block, another expedition was undertaken by Cornelius

Hendrickz on his boat the 'Restless'. It also turns out that the original settlements of Dutch are not well recorded, and the records of the Dutch West Indies Company were thrown in a dumpster sometime in the last century. In the letters of the States General regarding Dutch migrations to the great harbor of the North River, there are references to settlement activity as early as 1610, and the honorable Peter Minuet, who bought Manhattan from the Lenape tribes, didn't arrive until 1626, as the second governor of the new Dutch province. Therefore the attribution of 'Founder of New York City' is still up for grabs. A small settlement preceded the building of Fort Amsterdam in 1625, and a migration of 34 Dutch families arrived on Manhattan in 1624 under the command of Cornelius Jacobsen May, but it cannot be said that they landed on a virgin shore. There was at least a Dutch trading post among the different tribal trading posts at the foot of Manhattan, since that had been for centuries where Indian traders from North, East, South and West, and now traders from Europe had been haggling. This area is now called Wall Street. For the previous 14 years the Dutch traders had been plying the great river and hauling home prime beaver pelts and trading with the numerous tribes that gathered from the four corners. The New Amsterdam Company, which was later subsumed into the West Indies Company soon controlled this commerce by introducing European consumer goods to the pre-metal age marketplace.

Back to Oloff: in fact he didn't arrive until 1638, as a soldier for the West Indies Company with Governor-General Kieft. His genius was in obtaining an official status, first as Commissioner of Stores and Cargoes, and founding the first graft system and originating waterfront corruption (I'm so proud!). **Peter Stuyvesant** wondered out loud how the enterprising bureaucrat had converted a 30 guilder/year salary into an 100,000 guilder fortune in a few short years. The illusive profits of the West Indies Company may have found a home in the Van Cortland family vaults, since the commissioner had the oversight power to select the best pelts on the docks, basically a staple right, and trade them to the highest bidder.

**Van Cortland** was also on the 'Council of 9' that regularly pestered the States General and the West India Company with long complaints about the governing of the colony. Soon he was the second richest man in town (the richest was his brother-in-law, Govert Lookermans). Since the only taxable items in New Amsterdam was liquor, **Oloff** barred any government snoopers from his vast beer cellars, one of a few habits that ran him foul of the law.

Fortune and power was not an end in itself, and neither was baronial land as far as the eye can see along the Hudson.. It was to marry your children into the right families. If you had no fortune and no land, you had little control over who your children hooked up with, but the threat of disinheritance and worse kept the succession orderly. Marriages were arranged among the leading families, and so **Oloff Stevenz Van Cortland's** daughter **Maria** married **Jeremias van Rensselear**. Two nascent dynasties were joined in holy wedlock, setting an

example for succeeding generations.

**Van Cortland** held many official positions and at that tectonic moment in history when the British Fleet anchored in the bay, it was he who negotiated the terms of surrender between **John Winthrop Jr.** and **Peter Stuyvesant**. In the fabled waterfront tavern where these men met in 1664 were four of my ancestors, representing different power bases, commercial (**Van Cortland**), English colonies (**Winthrop**) Dutch power (**Stuyvesant**) and **Jeremias van Rensselaer** as President of the General Council representing all the inhabitants of the province from Staten Island to Albany. They determined the future of the great city of New York, and on a related note, their descendants intermarried like crazy.

The purchase from the Lenape Munsee of a large tract on the Hudson near Yonkers involved subterfuge and slight of hand, as it often did (see '**Bull**' **Smith**). Before negotiating with the local sachem **Van Cortlandt** hid a horse in the trees. The deal with the Lenape chief was for all the land **Oloff** could get around in a day, and the natives, assuming that like them he was on foot, were surprised when he emerged from a stand of trees mounted and ready to obtain his manor at a gallop. How his claim was verified is hard to say, since he must have been impossible to follow on foot.

**Oloff's** son **Stephanus Van Cortlandt** bought another manor on Long Island near Jones Beach. After **Jeremias** died **Maria van Rensselaer** controlled Rensselaerswyck into old age, limping on a crutch, having been lamed in the birth of her last child.

### **Family Connection:**

Jeremias and Maria's daughter Ann van Rensselaer married William Nicoll, son of Capt. Mathias Nicoll, and they moved to Long Island where they founded Islip. This led to a dizzying intermarriage between the Long Island clans of Smiths, Woodhulls, Floyds and Nicolls.

Bessie Springs Smith, the wife of Stanford White, was the daughter of Sarah Nicoll Clinch and Judge John Lawrence Smith of Smithtown (second cousins).

## THREE

### THE BULL RIDER

**Richard 'Bull' Smith** was a Welsh rancher, and, as they say, strong as a bull. He arrived with a family in tow in 1697 and allied himself to the Nissequogue, on the north shore, specifically to a chief from the Mohawk territory called Mayhong (this story is better told in Evan Pritchard's Native New Yorkers, chapter 16, but I'll try to paraphrase without actually plagiarizing). The Nissequogue were tall, often 6'7" according to Pritchard, and the Smiths were short and scrappy, so relationships between the two peoples often involved feats of strength and bragging rights. The Smiths and Nissequogues intermarried extensively and today there are many people who claim descendent from both **Bull Smith** and Mayhong living in the Smithtown area.

**Smith** was friendly and did extensive cattle trading with Lion Gardiner, who had been given rights for much land on Long Island including Smithtown township, by the Grand Sachem Wyandanqx, the ruler of much of Long Island. A deed dated July 14, 1659, witnessed by Richard Smith, gave the land to Gardiner in return for services rendered in retrieving the chief's daughter from the Narragansetts across on the mainland. According to legend, a group of Narragansetts attacked a wedding party of Wyandanqx's daughter, Heather Flower, killed the groom, who had killed Narragansetts, and kidnapped the beautiful bride. Lion Gardiner rounded up his friend **Smith** (according to a variation of the story) and sailed off to negotiate with the chief of the Narragansett, Ninigrate, for the successful return of the princess. A very grateful Wyandanch gave Gardiner the land around the Nissequogue River, but Gardiner said he already had all the land he needed at Gardiners Island. He sold this claim to **Bull Smith**, who in turn had to negotiate the purchase with the Nissequogue. From native accounts, Smith had to prove to the towering natives that he could carry a bull, and the deal was made for all the land he could carry the bull around in one day. When he collapsed from exhaustion, they laughed and rewarded his good sportsmanship by giving him the land anyway.

According to Smith family legend, the bull in question was ridden, not carried, and was a magnificent animal, immortalized by a large statue where route 25A meets rt. 25 at the entrance of Smithtown. The underlying deceit in this story is that a bull cannot be ridden like a horse, except of course by **Bull Smith**, the pugnacious and tenacious Welch cattleman, which anomaly was unknown to the natives of Nissequogue. But the ride is written in legend. There is a place called 'Bread and Cheese Hollow' where Smith stopped to rest, and which now forms the border between Huntington Township and Smithtown.

Gardiner sold the land to Smith in 1663, and in 1665 **Governor Mathais Nicoll** of New York awarded **Bull Smith** a patent for Smithtown. Smith always had his paperwork straight, and the patent held up against all litigation by

neighboring townships.

Lion Gardiner was a Scottish military man who had been hired by **John Winthrop Jr.** to build a fort at Saybrook, at the entrance of the Connecticut River, after which he moved to Long Island to find an island. For cattle ranchers, islands afforded perfect ranches, since the livestock could not stray off the island and the threat of Indian raids was slightly lessened. Every island in the Northeast that is called 'Governor's Island' was reserved for the Governor as a ranch, an important perk that allowed colonial governors to survive economically while serving in office and unable to give their attention to their prosperity. Sheep, goats and cattle mixed well on a small island, protected from wolves and other predators. Lion Gardiner bought Gardiners Island from Chief Wyandanqx for mere tokens, even though it was an important place of burial, and Lion's descendents are still residents of the island to this day.

**What shall we do with yonder wench who sulks and shivers in this balmy air**

**She hath no English and doth barely eat the food we set before her  
yet you say she is the sachem's daughter and what's more she is fair to  
look upon**

(my mother told me that)

## FOUR

### THE ONE-LEGGED GENERAL

The last and greatest of the Dutch Governor-Generals of New Netherlands, **Peter Stuyvesant** spent much of his administration fighting the inevitable. Enormous effort was made by his subjects, especially in Manhattan, to become citizens with rights, and he did everything to prevent it. The first municipal government of the city was established under his watch, mainly to protect the polyglot populace from his autocracy.

In the early seventeenth Manhattan was a minor outpost of the powerful Dutch

Martin. **Stuyvesant's** leg was shattered by a rough stone projectile shot from a canon as he stood on the ramparts waving his men over the wall. With his right leg a bloody disaster he urged his men on before fainting. The assault failed, but **Stuyvesant**, in spite of intense pain, kept on top of his job, micro-managing for weeks.

When the festering wounds of the amputation refused to heal, the brave director had to reluctantly give up his command and endure the interminable and painful journey back to Holland, finally recuperating at his sister's house. His nurse was **Judith Bayard**, the sister of his brother-in-law, and just like in the movies he fell in love with his ministering angel. Within a year his stump had healed, he was happily married and could hobble up to the offices of the West Indies Company ready for work.

Wilhelm Kieft had just been the subject of a petition for removal made by three upstart jonkers of Manhattan, Kuyter, Melyn and, laying the legal groundwork, Adriaen van der Donck. The petition against Kieft represented the popular overthrow of a tyrant, a habit that was already gaining popularity in England. The petition for removal came about because Kieft declared war on the native populations, who rose up and massacred in return, ruining or killing scores of settlers in outlying regions. Kieft then levied taxes on beer and beaver pelts to pay for his war, building his own coffin through mismanagement of the economy. The burgers of The Dutch West Indies Company often complained that they had to pay for the military support of the province even though years since New Amsterdam had been declared a free-trade port, that now everybody benefited from this military support except the company, which was going bankrupt and losing wars. The touchy issue of taxes arose from the company's desperate attempt to save itself by squeezing the population of the province.

Van der Donck's petition represented a province that wanted to rule itself. The petition itself was brought to Amsterdam and the board of the Company by Govert Lookermans, the brother-in-law of **Olaf van Cortlandt**. This may have been a precursor of the American Revolution a century and a half later, when taxes again were the hot-button issue. Events seem to echo throughout history. This petition coincided with the reappearance, in Amsterdam, of Stuyvesant off his sickbed. Here was a rising star with proven courage, honesty and, most important, loyalty to the company. The board of the Dutch West Indies Company, with no indecision, appointed **Petrus Stuyvesant** Director General of the Dutch colonies of New Netherlands and the Dutch Antilles.

When **Stuyvesant's** squadron arrived in the harbor, all the gunpowder in the fort was used to fire the guns in celebration. The new Director hobbled up the beach from the pier, possibly with assistance, since his wooden leg would have sunk in the sand. He was accompanied by his pregnant wife, his sister, three nephews (Nicholas, Balthazar and Peter Bayard) and a troop of marines, his Vice Director, a secretary, a treasurer and a collection of officers and gentlemen who would have followed him where ever he went. The wooden leg

and jewelled sword hanging from a leather sash and the silver pistol in his belt bespoke a man not afraid of a scrap. He sat down in the stout chair provided for him in the broad sunlight as the notables of New Amsterdam removed their hats and waited to be acknowledged. Stuyvesant's wide feathered helmet stayed on and he peered at his new subjects from under its shadow.

The new boss was not a democrat, and did not even think normal people were capable of governing themselves. They had to be shown the iron fist and order had to be imposed, the streets cleaned, the harbor protected, and these things were done. His experience in Brazil and the Caribbean had been exclusively that of a military dictatorship, and until shortly after he lost his leg, he had been the dictator. Now he was the 'Director', or as his subjects called him, 'the General'.

New Amsterdam did not resemble John Winthrop's Boston; it was a lawless, corrupt, brawling, drinking, pipe-smoking (women *and* men) noisy town. Prostitution, piracy, drunken brawls and Indian wars were overseen by corrupt burgers and civic meetings were held in taverns. One of the first things Stuyvesant did was to turn the cattle and pig market into a village green for recreation, mainly bowling, the kind of activity that the Puritan fathers would hardly have encouraged, especially on the Sabbath.

Boston and New Amsterdam invite comparison, since the opposing styles of government were also ethical constructs, one was a rigid theocracy with basic rights and voting power of citizens (unfortunately only 20% of the population were citizens, but these were heads of families whose votes represented the whole household), the other was a polyglot bustle where no one had any rights besides what they could claim for themselves. You can be sure the Yankees/Red Socks rivalry has deep roots; the Dutch word 'jonker', meaning a young gentleman, was often used in the pejorative sense, sometimes by Bostonians. Bostonians were not originally Yankees, apparently Yankee Doodle was a Dutch-American. Technically the Bostonians were Englishmen, and they could vote, they voted their venerable **Gov. Winthrop** out of office twice. But the unfortunate citizens of New Amsterdam could only complain, not that it did them any good. Their main exercise of popular power consisted in ignoring the decrees of the tyrannical **Peter Stuyvesant**.

**Stuyvesant** tried to impose taxes to relieve the terrible financial condition of the colony, but he was ignored. The only consumable that citizens would pay taxes on was liquor, so he taxed the taverns. Actual revenue began to flow, which was used to build up the town. It is unlikely that any tax revenue flowed back to the company in Amsterdam.

Stuyvesant ruled by decree, by bullying, but under his watch New Amsterdam transformed from a lawless corrupt outpost into a city upon which the English cast a greedy eye and eventually rolled over into the nascent British Empire.

For a long time the Puritan governors of New England put off Stuyvesant's

because Kieft was dead and could not take the stand on his own behalf. The two jonkers soon returned to New Amsterdam with an official document granting them immunity from **Stuyvesant's** bullying. His autocracy was being reigned in and slowly tamed by the popular mandate that Kuyter and Melyn represented, though that did not prevent him from behaving autocratically, as was his style.

From Maine to Connecticut the only European tongue spoken was English (some French in Maine), the only form of worship strict Protestantism. Manhattan by contrast was rapidly filling up with every kind of refugee; Huguenots, Moravians, Jews, Anabaptists, Waldenses, Scotch Presbyterians, Caribbean pirates, escaped slaves, creating the polyglot cosmopolitan city that continues three hundred and fifty years later to soak up the rest of the world like a sponge.

**Stuyvesant**, guided by the policies of the Company, strictly forbade the setting up of any church except Calvinistic Dutch Reform. When some Quakers escaped from the religious tyranny of Massachusetts and began proselytizing and meeting on Long Island, Stuyvesant had their leader arrested and tortured, hoping that hanging him by his thumbs, starving and whipping him would change his religious views. When that didn't work, Stuyvesant's sister-in-law Anna Bayard pleaded with her brother on behalf of the half-dead still obstinate Quaker, and he was lowered to the ground and released. A petition of some leading citizens of Queens demanded leniency for non-violent worshipers of every stripe, and the board of the Company back in Holland, where religious tolerance was pervasive as long as you weren't papist, conceded that religious autocracy was untenable. **Stuyvesant** had to bend his natural tendencies to the new paradigm and allow freedom of worship.

It is worth mentioning that religious persecution in New Netherlands was the exclusive responsibility of Stuyvesant and the Company, not the people living there, or the Amsterdam Chamber of Deputies. By contrast in Massachusetts where sports and other pleasures were forbidden, hanging Quakers, hunting heretics and burning witches became a popular diversion.

Religious tolerance drew more people to the island, and now New Netherlands' population growth was in warp drive, doubling between 1653 and 1664 to about 10,000 in the area.

Tensions with the Lenape tribes were kept under control, but it was a unfortunate myth of tribal life that young maidens were impressed by the quantity of scalps a brave could hang from his belt. Whether this is true is under question, but foreign policy is often determined by the mood of young warriors. Pritchard in 'Native New Yorkers' paints a different picture of the Lenape tribes, saying that aggression was rare except in retaliation. Nevertheless, any violent confrontation and the settlers of outlying communities in Hoboken, Hackensack, the Bronx and elsewhere were in danger of attack. War could quickly be provoked by a settler's killing a native, for whatever reason.

lacked evidence in the form of French settlers, but the Dutch West Indies Company was very interested in the commercial possibilities of the large river. Now the British, instigated by **John Winthrop Jr.**, were very interested, and, long story short (see Ch. 7 Junior for more of this story) Nicholls accepted the fort's surrender.

**Peter Stuyvesant** returned to Holland a year later to make his report to the States General and the West Indies Company. At first the magistrates were cool, almost hostile, putting the blame and frustration at the loss of the colony squarely on the Director. He wrote to New York for evidence to support his conduct, and it all pointed to his wisdom and statesmanship. The tone of the interrogation changed and his reputation grew.

He returned to New York and lived out the remainder of his life on his Bowery farm, a beloved figure strolling the strand, enjoying the companionship of his new best friend Governor Richard Nicolls, the new resident of Whitehall, Stuyvesant's old house at South Ferry. The old soldier died at the age of eighty in 1672 and was buried in the church near his house, where St. Mark's is today. His legacy is the greatest city in the world, which took shape and braced for its destiny under his rule.

At the corner of Thirteenth Street and Third Ave. was a peach tree that Stuyvesant planted. It stood for exactly two hundred years, and when it died a pit (stone?) from the original tree was planted.

**Stuyvesant's son Nicholas** married **Elizabeth van Schlichtenhorst** and their son **Gerardus** married **Stuyvesant's niece Judith Bayard**. The next three generations married into Livingstons, Winthrops and Chanlers, respectively. The succeeding generation was **John Winthrop Chanler**, heir to Stuyvesant lands and whose marriage to **Maddie Astor Ward** begot the 'Astor Orphans'.

## FIVE

### JOHN WINTHROP

SEMPRINGHAM, LINCOLNSHIRE July 29, 1629:

An open carriage rumbled along the road to Lincolnshire. The two quarter horses sweated in the midsummer heat, having slowed from a trot to a fast walk to a slow walk. The three passengers, Puritan clerics in shirtsleeves, were in slow discussion, in Latin, that made the horses' gate less of a concern than the weighty issues tensing their conversation and furrowing their brows. What they were discussing was whether to write a new prayer book for their congregations, and Roger Williams, breaking into the English language, declared that any new prayer book would only become 'official' like the present one, 'The Book of Common Prayer' which had the Royal approval and which they were all three under investigation for refusing to use.

**Roger Williams** jumped to his feet in the carriage to make his point, and was soon walking along on the road beside the cart at a fast pace, continuing to press his argument, that there should be no official Book of Prayers. The two other passengers were hardly convinced, with John Cotton opening his bible on his lap to read to himself in the middle of Roger's rant.

Roger was making the point that every thought was a prayer, every flower. Cotton turned the page of his Bible. Once vented, Roger settled down and climbed back aboard the cart. The dust and insects were all God's plan. Conversation turned to the business which brought them to their meeting. This business was a plan to build a new Jerusalem of Living Saints, a heaven on earth, possibly on the shores of Massachusetts or Maine.

Heaven would be the creation of men and women exercised by almost constant religious arguments, but also experienced in law, real politic and including soon, out of necessity, farming and ranching. This call to Jerusalem was cause for catharsis and joy, not to mention trepidation and every other sense in the emotional spectrum. The dream of escaping from the mother country, going into exile for dissenting, was given as positive and biblical a spin as could be managed by their Puritan theology, but at least two of the

passengers were under arrest warrants from Arch bishop Laud, the grand vizier of the Church of England and toady to Charles I, and in grave danger of imprisonment or worse. They had both seen worse, their teachers and spiritual guides burned at the stake for unsanctioned thoughts.

The passengers, **Roger Williams**, 26, Rev. Thomas Hooker, 38, and Rev. John Cotton had been called to Sempringham Castle by their leaders in the Puritan movement, to discuss the divine and bright shining future across the North Atlantic where they and their congregations were to live in the light of God. Their leaders had considered Ireland as a possible destination, but the proximity to a million Irish Catholics and Britain itself factored into the rejection of that plan. Now they seemed to be looking farther across the horizon, and the theological and political implications of what they were about to do set their minds soaring over the high clouds.

The sun crossed the meridian as they passed through a large gate into the shade of giant elms lining a long neatly straight drive. The wheels crunched pleasantly on the clean gravel. None of the passengers were too impressed by the grandeur of Sempringham Castle, having all spent half their lives in grand buildings of State, Church and scholarship. The seat of the Earl of Lincoln was nevertheless a cross between a building of state and a private home, and nothing to sniff at. It stood five stories above a medieval mote only half filled in, as if differences between the Earl and his enemies in Buckingham Palace could erupt at any minute into nasty hostilities. Theophilus Clinton, 4th Earl of Lincoln, was himself was at this moment fighting papists in Germany, at the head of an army of local farmboys, and his wife Lady Brigit had taken advantage of her husband's absence by opening her castle to the gathering Puritans, in age-old defiance to the crown, and in great secrecy.

**Thomas Dudley** greeted them at the entrance that had until recently, that is a hundred years ago, been a drawbridge. On one side of the sturdy Bailiff of Lincolnshire stood a pair of armed constables, on his other side his young daughter Anne. The daughter would grow up to be Anne Bradstreet, New England's first writer of note.

**Dudley** was as firmly anchored on the side of the Puritans in his politics as was his employer the Earl, and determined to carry authority in that community. He didn't see these clerics stepping from their surrey as administrators but as spiritual leaders. If anyone should govern it was he, not these dusty divines with their little satchels. He welcomed them and bade the constables show them to their bedroom to wash up. Servants followed with the scant luggage. The clerics travelled light, needing only a change of clothes and a few books, the bible in the original Greek, the sermons of Calvin.. they also had straight razors and hair brushes, but these were rarely used. This was one of those rare occasions. [John Hooker had a long beard] .

The three clerics emerged from their baths in crisp clerical garb with their skullcaps firmly in place and were shown through the oaken halls of medieval

armor and stained-glass heraldry towards the main dining hall. The large room was the favored gathering place for the denizens of the castle, the casement windows were open to tempt any wayward breeze into the interior. Slits of sunlight poked through the drawn curtains and reflected onto the portraits and battle scenes and weapon displays on the walls. The men and women of the Puritan leadership had gathered not at the long dining table but at the opposite end of the hall where the Earl and his wife often ate in relative privacy. These gathered souls greeted the newcomers warmly and introductions were made where needed.

**Dudley** first presented them to the Lady Brigit, seated in dark, subdued finery with a modestly laced white collar, at the head of the table. She had heard of all three of them and was blessed to make their acquaintance. Next they shook the hands of Sir Johnson and his wife Lady Arbella, daughter of Lady Brigit, followed by greetings to various divines, magistrates and potential backers, chief among them occupying the largest chair William Fiennes, Lord Saye and Sele, 8th Baron of Broughton Castle and brother to Lady Brigit. He would become a major plotter with Parliament against King Charles. This was to be a commercial adventure as well as a spiritual one, and Fiennes was already invested. So was his friend the Earl of Warwick. These men wore their faith on their sleeves and no where else.

At last the new arrivals were able to sit, murmur a quick blessing and eat of the food still on the table, swallowing the quail and venison with speed and enthusiasm, while nodding to the various people whispering somberly in their ears. The wine was poured and a toast was made to the sweet Savior and the God of Lights (as opposed to England's reigning monarch), followed by a cheerful amen.

The great doors of the hall were pulled open by two liveried servants, creating a breeze at the other end of the chamber. **Dudley** jumped up to greet the new arrival.

Backlit by the bright sunlight pressing through the curtains, the arrival was spectral. The man walking towards the seated divines was tall and solemn, stern eyed, a long face elongated by a pointed beard covered with mud, and if the new Jerusalem was to have a Moses, it could not have picked a better candidate in terms of biblical resonance with the great patriarchs of Judea leading their congregations towards life and freedom, away from death and slavery. **John Winthrop**, magistrate and pater familias of Groton Manor in East Anglia, had fallen off his horse into a ditch, escaping serious injury by the grace of God, and, caked with dried dirt, had not yet had time to clean himself up. His powerful glare and bizarre appearance sealed his authority. Some of the assembled stood at the sight of the specter, as they would for a judge or a governor, except the Ladies and the Lords, who didn't stand for the middle class.

**Winthrop** was offered a bowl and towel, which he employed against the clay patina covering his beard and face with mixed success. He sat for food and

water, carrying on a quiet conversation with Lady Brigit who waited until the magistrate had finished his plate before tapping a wine glass to call the meeting.

All attention was locked on the future governor of Massachusetts Bay as he stood from his chair and began to speak of the plan in the making in flowing syllables and grand biblical references, carried by a melodious voice that always steered clear of hubris and politics. He had been voted the leader of the migration only a month before, and he explained that at the very moment in London a group of fellow saints/magistrates were drawing up a charter for the Massachusetts Bay company.

**Dudley** spoke: where is this company to be headquartered?

**Winthrop:** That has not been determined, as there is no London office as yet. Since the meeting is taking place in a private residence of Emmanuel Downing.

**Roger Williams**, the youngest man in the room, suggested, half in jest, that they take the charter with them, that the headquarters would be in the new heaven. A buzz of surprise followed, and the idea was quickly seconded by three others of the group. Lady Brigit's eyes lit up at the daring of the plan. She suggested that such an intention should be kept secret, and all the assembled murmured ascent.

What rules do we follow, the laws of England or our own laws?

The holy word of God, as much as that is possible. In order to avoid tyranny we will be a self-determining community, with each household of freemen, that is each member of the congregation having a vote in the general council.

**Dudley** spoke again. Where precisely was the colony to be settled ?

**John Winthrop** replied by pulling a map from his valise and unfolding it on the table. The gathered stood and looked down on the crude drawing of the New England shoreline inscribed with the signature of Capt. John Smith. A star was drawn at the site of the Plymouth colony, and another at the Agawam settlement, now renamed Salem, where, as Winthrop pointed out, their mutual friend John Endicott was struggling to keep his congregation alive.

**John Winthrop**, touching the latter star: We will touch land at this point and determine if it suits our needs, and if the local population of Indians welcomes us or tries to reject us. The previous settlers have experienced both hostile and friendly natives and such is our expectation. Hostility will be answered in kind through the assembling of

having spent far more time than I in Star Chamber, enscribing the legal code of the land, in code I might add, and now as Deacon of (Sir William Martin)....., and it would be our honor to except his company on this adventure.

**Williams:** I am newly wed, and contracted to Sir William Martin for another two years, so I cannot join this expedition, to my infinite regret, and therefore neither can my small congregation. But don't despair of seeing us after the expiration of my obligation.

**Winthrop:** You will always have a place among us. Also joining us will be Lady Arbela, who has lent her name to a ship now under construction at Dover, and her husband Mister Johnson. This craft will be joined by the Lyon and the ..... under Captain Kirk, with all intention of sailing May of next year.

All clergymen will bring their congregations, lists of which are kept in a secret location, and project over three hundred enlightened and brave souls will be soon preparing for this journey. Thank you all, to Lord Saye and Sele and Lord Brook for their financial and legal support, to Lady Brigit for her warm welcome, to our absent host the Lord of Lincolnshire for being on the side of right against papists and corrupters of the Lord's will.

My son John is assisting with the charter in London and will remain in England for the first few years to handle the affairs of the company.

And now I close with the assurance from her Ladyship that we are not to be chased out of her residence right away at the close of the meeting, but are free to tarry and enjoy a few days rest among the worthy folk of Lincolnshire. There are gardens, I hear, and the library is open to all.

The meeting broke up into individual discussions. The country that would prove to be the mightiest on earth had been launched, there was no turning back, and conversations returned to the sticky problem of the book of prayers, mixed with general catching up.

**ROGER WILLIAMS**

"It was not price or Money that could have purchased Rhode Island, it was love"

Roger Williams is one of history's lighthouses, and of all the beacons guiding disgruntled Europeans to American shores he shone perhaps the brightest. The intensity of his political thinking created the basic ideology of our country, and everybody should spend some time studying him.

No one ever painted his portrait, so we don't know what he looked like, but that has not stopped Rhode Islanders from raising statues in his 'likeness'. Luckily for us he wrote all his life, very fast, preserving his central thoughts before another emergency swept him up in the constant tornado that was his day to day. His day job was preaching his mind, and he had a lot to say. His writing is overwrought, funny, bombastic, brilliant, barely readable. His deeds were epic, his peacemaking was epic. His friends were epic, all the top dogs of the time: John Winthrop, John Winthrop Jr, Oliver Cromwell, Canonicus, Massasoit, Matapouissett (King Philip), William Bradford, Sir Edward Coke, John Milton, Peter Stuyvesant ..... His body was epic, canoeing thirty miles in a storm to stop an Indian war. His enemies were epic: James I, Charles I, The Duke of Buckingham, Captain John Underhill, John Coddington, Rev. John Cotton....

Even among the other founders, his resume was epic: Founded city of Providence, founded State of Rhode Island, founded American Baptist Church, invented freedom of religion, wrote best selling books, prevented at least two Indian wars.. And he founded the first working democracy since Athens, not counting the Iroquoise longhouses.

(the following is written as a sketch for a biographical screenplay)

-Young **Roger Williams**, poor and skinny, shivering in the square outside Charterhouse School, watching the burning at the stake of his teacher. That was the punishment for teaching heretical religious views, and the warmth of the fire was not comforting.

-Soon after, Young Roger selected by Sir Edward Coke, the top jurist in England, as a protégé. As a legal secretary, at the age of 14, he quickly learns Latin, Greek, and how to take dictation in code. At the time the government could put people to death for having unsanctioned thoughts, so it was important to have revolutionary political and legal writing made indecipherable. This was done by developing language skills to confound the Royalist spies.

-Roger is in the upper balcony of Star Chamber, among other young secretaries,

as all hell breaks loose among the Lords below. Sir Edward Coke oversees the chaos from his seat as Speaker. The King's men are pounding on the door, eventually breaking it down and ushering in King James I, who disbands parliament.

-Accompanying Sir Edward, Roger travels to a castle outside London, where they meet the king and his beautiful boyfriend the Duke of Buckingham. Young Williams witnesses the decadence of aristocratic life, and he is horrified that this man is the head of the Church of England. He starts to harbor radical Separatist views under his earnest brow.

-Young Roger is at the country home of Sir Edward Coke. Edward's daughter takes an interest, but she is married off to the Duke of Buckingham's brother, for political reasons.. This marriage does not go well.

-Roger attends Penbroke College at Cambridge, where he is under strict orders not to talk to anyone, lest he spread his dangerous views.

-Roger falls in love with a young aristocratic girl at the estate of Sir William, where he is Chaplain, hiding from the spies of Archbishop Laud. He makes his intentions known to the girl's dowager mother, to whom he ministers, but the mother refuses him in an unkind way. He is broken hearted and nearly dies.

-He meets Mary Barnard and they fall in love. He gets an invitation, very secret, to Sempringham Castle, the seat of the Earl of Lincoln, from Lady Bridgit. He travels to Sempringham in a carriage with Rev. John Hooker, a charismatic evangelist, and Rev. John Cotton, his future antagonist in published theological bickering.

-John Winthrop enters the great room at Sempringham. He fell off his horse on the road from East Anglia and covered with mud and dust he looks like a combination of Moses and Abraham, which in fact he is. Winthrop stands at the great table and imparts his vision of a New Jerusalem among the Lost Tribe of Israel, a community of living saints and divine order in New England.

-Winthrop tells how at this moment a charter is being written in London for the Massachusetts Bay Company. Someone asks.. "where is this company to be headquartered?" Winthrop replies that that will not be specified. This causes excitement when somebody suggests that there's no reason they couldn't take the charter with them, meaning the colony would be self-governing.

-A ship, the Lyon, crosses the stormy Atlantic. Roger lands in Boston, where he

is greeted with respect by John Winthrop and given a great opportunity, to minister to the town. He reveals his Separatism, which is a heretical doctrine among the Boston ministers and magistrates. Gov. John Winthrop explains patiently that if any hint of Separatism got to Whitehall in London, their enemies would lose no time in sending a squadron with a governor general to take over the colony. They vote to expel Roger Williams from Boston and to put guns on Castle Island at the entrance to the harbor to ward off a British invasion.

-Roger and Mary Williams walk to Salem, an older town than Boston. His preaching excites the town.. He urges women to wear veils in church, talks rapturously about the second coming of the sweet lord. People start to believe him, even when he talks about the C. of E. as corrupt, coming from a corrupt line. This frightens the magistrates in Boston and they expel him from Salem. He and Mary board a fishing sloop and head for Plymouth.

-In Plymouth he befriends Massasoit, the chief of the Wampanog.

-As he learns the Algonquin dialects, he teaches Gov. William Bradford Hebrew, while also learning Dutch from Bradford. He and Bradford argue religious issues into the night. Williams: I can think and believe what I want, without a government telling me what to think and believe.

Bradford: And so you have, but can you extend those rights to everyone?

Williams: Only if I have that power, and power is a corruption. Jesus never sought political power, and so as a man of the cloth I cannot either. And I could not, if I had such power, define what is heresy or punish it as a crime.

Bradford: Then it's good that you don't have this political power, because I can't imagine what kind of ungodly chaos your town would suffer.

-John Winthrop visits from Boston, on foot, with an entourage. Roger Williams gives the sermon on Sunday. The question he poses is "what is a good man."

-Winthrop says it comes from the old saying 'all good men and true', and that it's a shame to argue about it. That's the word from the head guy. Later that evening Williams proposes to Winthrop that they have stolen the land from the Indians and King James' patents were worthless unless the tribal lands were dutifully bought. Winthrop replies that God must have meant them to have the land, clearing it for their benefit through smallpox. Williams is horrified, reminding

Winthrop that this is the lost tribe of Israel.

-Winthrop leaves the next morning for Boston. Bradford lends Winthrop his horse.

-Williams and Bradford argue,

-Williams gets an urgent invitation from the dying minister in Salem to come and take over the pulpit. A small number of Plymouth people follow him to Salem, where he thunders on about the corrupt church. He also negotiates a peace treaty between the Narragansett chief Canonibus and Massasoit, preventing a war.

-Everywhere he goes is either by foot or by canoe. His house in Salem has two stories, two rooms per story. His daughter Mary is born in the house. He ministers five long services every week, plus baptisms and funerals, plus heavy farming duties to keep his family from starving.

-He almost dies from exhaustion, regaining his strength to climb the pulpit and lambaste sinners. Then he has to travel to Boston to face the court, and into Indian territories to negotiate treaties. He is thirty years old.

-In Puritan towns, church attendance is compulsory, and many of Williams' most intense followers are servants, people who were made to go to church but don't really want to. In one year on the pulpit, Williams changes Salem into an enclave of radical Separatism. His charismatic intensity shines from the pulpit and draws people of all levels into his arguments for a pure society free of corruption. Williams rails against King Charles, that the patents are invalid because they usurped the land from the Indians, the Americans. In Boston the magistrates are becoming alarmed.

-Williams preaches that the cross of St. George the dragon-slayer on the English flag was given by the pope, and is therefore a symbol of the antichrist. Endicott agrees and orders it to be cut from the flag.

-Governor Dudley to the ministers: "you are deceived in the man if you think he will condescend to learn from any of you."

-July 8 1635, Roger Williams is summoned to the General Court. The court agrees with Calvin that the duty of government is to buttress the church, through coercion if necessary. "Your preachings are all contrary to that, and if taken to an extreme, would ultimately lead to separating church and state, which would open the door wide for the devil himself, towards chaos and a sinful society."

-Cotton, on Williams: "he is a haberdasher of small Questions against the power of the state."

-Williams preaches that the magistrates, the General Court, cannot interfere with church matters, even in the case of heresies and tyrannies. The General Court rules that anyone preaching that should be removed.

-John Winthrop Jr. arrives in Boston aboard the Abigail with his new wife Elizabeth Reade, also with Sir Henry Vane. They witness the trial of Roger Williams, Winthrop Jr. as an Assistant, Henry Vane as a brilliant young aristocrat guest who would be elected governor in a few short years (he would be beheaded in the Tower of London during the Restoration).

-On October 8 Cotton convinces magistrates to vote for banishment. The congregation in Salem turns against Williams as soon as the General Court applies economic pressure in the form of extra farmland.

-Governor Haynes reads the sentence: "Whereas Mr Roger Williams, one of the elders of the church of Salem, hath broached and divulged divers views & dangerous opinions, against the authority of magistrates, as also writ letters of defamantion, both of the magistrates and churches here, and that before any conviction, and yet maintaineth the same without retraction, it is therefore ordered that the said Mr. Williams shall depart out of this jurisdiction within six weeks now next ensuing...."

-Winthrop advises Williams to head for Narragansett Bay. A harsh winter sets in early.

-He names his second daughter Freebourne

-The General Court decides that Williams is still preaching his heresies out of his house and that he should be sent back to England to face punishment. Williams is sick, can't get out of bed, so Capt. John Underhill marches through the snow with a troop of militia to arrest him. Roger Williams is gone.

-Trudging through the snow in blizzard, white-out conditions, Williams makes snowshoes as he learned from his Wampaneog friends. Still he nearly succumbs in his weakened condition to the deadly cold, especially at night seeking shelter in hollow trees.

But he knows the way, and one chilly morning a Wampanog scout finds him frozen in a tree., Says Williams is brought back from the dead in an Indian village, slowly recovering his strength. He wakes up. Massasoit is there and says

**“What Cheer, Netop?”**

Williams speaks to his friend in his language, explaining his intention to settle.

-They find a site along the river and Williams begins to build and plant. He is joined by some men from Salem. A man from Plymouth shows up accompanied by Indian scouts, and tells Williams to move to the other side of the river. But I've just planted!

Williams and his friends cross the river in a canoe, passing a rock they see Narragansett braves on top of the rock, well armed. As they pass under the rock, a brave shouts “What cheer, netop?”

Williams shouts back “what cheer, netop!” Then he yells at them to meet him on the other side of the point, in fluent Algonquin dialect. As they land, Indians gather.

-Eventually Canonicus, the wise and great chief of the Narragansetts, arrives and they greet each other like brothers. They negotiate a site for settlement, and Canonicus welcomes his new subjects with a ceremony.

-And so the first democracy in modern times, a mean, impoverished, dirty hole of a town, where anyone could think freely and speak their mind, believing what their heart tells them, is founded. It is probably the freest place on earth. For the time being, they are no longer the subjects of King Charles of England, but of the Sachem Canonicus.

-Williams discusses politics with Canonicus.. and as far as separation of church and state, and liberty of conscience, and many other issues, divine and secular, they are on the same page.

## SEVEN

### JUNIOR

**John Winthrop Jr. (1606 -1676)** was a pragmatist and a pacifist in a time of belligerent struggles over land, power and religion. Among divines, utopians, Parliamentarians, regicides, royalists and bible-thumpers, he was a soft-spoken empiricist. He was drawn to alchemical, scientific, and medical practice, studying in Latin and German, always with an urge to heal, to produce something real, and these pursuits earned him a distinguished membership as a Founding

Fellow in the Royal Society, the only American so honored. He had no trouble charming anybody on either side of the Atlantic, and in his lifetime he was never voted out of any of the numerous top-level civic posts that he held, many simultaneously. His tendency to found a settlement and then leave it to do something else made him a kind of colonial diva and only added to his mystique and aura of power.

For most of his life he had powerful men like **Peter Stuyvesant**, Oliver Cromwell, his father **John Winthrop the Elder**, **Roger Williams**, the Mohegan Chief Unca, King Charles II and the King's brother the Duke of York eating out of his hand, though often his real antagonist was an agent for one or another of the neighboring 'plantations' that Winthrop was intent on devouring, Rhode Island, New Haven and New Netherland to be specific. Colonies all over New England, including New Amsterdam, were begging him like desperate lovers to reside among them, and he took full advantage of this in his political activities.

He was slight and dark, with a prominent hooked nose and thick arching eyebrows, under which he peered with ironic detachment at the world of troubles and complications constantly interrupting his intellectual activities. He was attracted to and attracted the most brilliant men of his day. He liked nothing better than to detoxify a dangerous political situation with a combination of discreet manipulation, charm and delaying tactics, making him a supremely gifted ruler. He dressed mostly in high-Puritan black, never favoring ostentation, though the half of his life spent in primitive start-up settlements must have required different outfits from the half spent in ornate European interiors or in spartan Puritan meetinghouses.

His lifelong goal was to found basic industries in America, including, with very moderate success, a salt plant in Salem and an iron ore smelting plants in Braintree and New Haven. His adult experience was of growing political power, deepening knowledge of the natural world, and deepening debt, since his prolonged public service caused him to neglect his personal business. He had to borrow money in pursuit of a charter for Connecticut, which ate away at some of his vast land holdings.

He was America's first physician and apothecary, skills which he taught himself. One reason so little is generally known about **John Winthrop Jr.** is that an appreciation of his life requires at least some familiarity with the fast moving and complex historical circumstances. It also precludes a certain amount of leisure and incentive to absorb 400 dense pages of events and characters, such as those in Robert C. Black III's 1966 biography 'The Younger John Winthrop'. When you add to this source a number of other sources, and multiply that by the number of other **founders**, this project starts to be a commitment.

This is what inspired me to write these chapters; a lot is known by a very few people, and not much by anybody else, and if I'm any example, this includes most descendents. Now my job is to do justice to **John Winthrop Jr.** in just a few pages, and to do this justice, I have to take inspiration from my subject, a

man who worked hard and effectively all his life. Americans, the beneficiaries of what he accomplished, should know his story.

Larger than life characters usually get an early start. By page 100 of 'The Younger John Winthrop' my remote ancestor already had a lifetime of achievement under his belt. He had sailed to Turkey and Venice, been in a naval war, managed the affairs of the Massachusetts Bay Company from London for the first crucial year and a half of that enterprise, founded Ipswich, Ma. and Saybrook, Ct., brought many backers into the Company while remaining an 'Assistant' of the General Court of Massachusetts (basically a board member) and assembled the largest library in America. He was on his second marriage, had crossed the Atlantic four times, and there are still 300 pages to go!

The reality of those next three hundred pages was brought home to me on a recent bus ride from New York to Providence on rt. 95 North. By some odd serendipity I had chosen this volume as reading matter for the trip, which I had made countless times. I looked up from my book as we went through New Haven, thinking 'ahh, New Haven!' and looking at my watch. The next time I looked up was on the bridge across the Thames, which from the level of a car offers no view at all but from a bus reveals a panorama of the towns of New London and Groton, with Fishers Island in the distance. The realization hit me like a snowball that what I was reading coincided one-to-one with the cities, towns and state borders along my route, all of which owed their existence as parts of Connecticut in large measure to **John Winthrop Jr.** He founded New London, and Fisher's Island was given to him as his manor, also the border with Rhode Island was an issue that occupied almost half his life. Another of his numerous life achievements was incorporating the colony of New Haven into Connecticut jurisdiction, which, like everything else he did, was a lot harder than it sounds.

In a complicated cross-Atlantic card game that lasted many years, and in which **Winthrop** was the dealer, the Dutch lost a province, Long Island went, kicking and screaming to the British in New York, New Haven became part of Connecticut, the Connecticut border was established at Westchester, and all this was done without gun fire or bloodletting, the work of a master.

The eldest child of **Governor John Winthrop the elder**, he was born in Groton Manor Sussex England Feb. 12, 1606. His mother, **Mary Forth**, died young, as did his first stepmother. He attended the Grammar School at Bury St. Edmonds, studying Latin almost exclusively, then went to Trinity College in Dublin, quitting before he could earn a degree. He was not a great scholar, but deeply impressed many of his teachers who saw in the engaging young man evidence of greatness.

He studied some law in the Inner Temple of London, 1624-27, then sailed to Turkey, stopped in Venice and Rotterdam, making many friends along the way. Back in London he shipped as clerk to the Admiral in the disastrous naval assault

by the Duke of Buckingham on La Rochelle. All this time he was helped along by the connections of his uncle Emmanuel Downing, a prominent London barrister of considerable influence, and a Puritan (Downing Street in London gets its name from his family).

When **John Winthrop** set out with the original settlers of Boston, **John Winthrop Jr.** stayed behind to manage the affairs of the Massachusetts Bay Company and to properly dispose of Groton Manor, the **Winthrop** family seat. He married his first cousin Martha Fones, causing a bit of a scandal.

He finally sailed for Boston on the *Abigail*, a strenuous year and a half (for both **John Winthrops**) after the initial expedition.

He was appointed assistant to the governor in Boston (**John Winthrop, the elder**). The government of Boston, like that of most 'plantations', was originally a corporation and the 'assistants' were like members of the board. **Winthrop** would be automatically reelected to this office, a 'favorite son', as it were, though his membership was more in support of his father than the other way around.

He founded the town of Ipswich, (then called Agawam) north of Boston, primarily to prevent French incursions from Acadia. Founding a town is not easy or comfortable, by definition there are, at first, no amenities. The sort of encampment that preceded the habitats must have been quasi-military, and once houses were built there was still no infrastructure for basic human needs. The most pressing need was for a qualified minister, which says a lot about the mortal rigors of frontier life. **Winthrop** moved his family into the house that was built for him, but within months Martha died in childbirth.

He left the new town of Ipswich to manage on its own, and **Winthrop** soon sailed from Boston back to London with a long list of colonial and personal business to attend to. Rotten weather landed him on the west coast of Ireland, and he proceeded overland (and sea) to Scotland, eventually reaching London, having along the way raised money and support from wealthy aristocrats. The highlight of his London adventures was the whirlwind courtship of and marriage to the eighteen-year-old **Elizabeth Reade**.

In London, he also courted Lord Saye and Selle, and Lord Brooke, selling them on the idea of building a settlement at the mouth of the Connecticut River, intended to give them control of the entire Connecticut River Valley. **Winthrop** in turn hired a Scotch soldier Lion Gardiner to build the planned fort at Saybrook (now Old Saybrook). Gardiner and **Winthrop**, with their families, sailed to Boston on the next available ship to start this new venture.

The soldiers that sailed with **Winthrop** from Boston to the Connecticut River found the arms of their High Mightinesses the States General of Greater Netherlands nailed to a large oak, claiming the mighty river for the Dutch. **Winthrop's** soldiers tore down the plaque and put up a happy face. It reveals a lot that the Dutch thought territorial conquest was that simple, but that is a common mistake among the characters in this book, even **Winthrop's** backers,

since the fertile Connecticut Valley was already overrun by competing colonial congregations. The fort never controlled much more than the area within range of its guns, (except in 1670, when Gov. Andros tried to take half of Connecticut in the name of the Duke of York. The military expedition did not get past the fort) and when war with the Pequot nation threatened, **Winthrop** left Saybrook and returned to Boston. His lifelong habit was to skirt military conflicts and defuse them from the centers of power, which then were in Boston and London.

When his contract in Saybrook expired, Lion Gardiner bought an island in Peconic Bay from chief Wyandanx to settle on, (Gardiner's Island) founding a dynasty of his own and raising goats and sheep. **Winthrop** would later try the same thing on Fisher's Island, buying livestock from Gardiner.

Again **Winthrop** set sail for England with a list of chores, to raise money for the financially stressed colonies, to interest investors in an iron smelting plant, and to sell anybody and everybody on the New England adventure. In London the Parliamentarians and the Royalist Cavaliers were coming to blows. He escaped from the distasteful political confrontations and sailed across the channel to seek out European minds and technology. His interests were in medicine, alchemy and metallurgy, disciplines that for him overlapped, and he found great minds in, mainly, Hamburg and then Brussels, where he went to trace down his trunk taken off a vessel by a Belgian pirate.

He returned to Boston with fresh energy and Belgian/Spanish iron technology, and with barely enough finances or skilled ironmongers he set up an ironworks in Braintree, Ma.

**Winthrop** gradually moved his family and homestead from Cambridge to the mouth of the Pequot River (now the Thames). There he founded the town of Pequot, later named by its inhabitants, with equal parts hope and ostentation, New London. He took over Fisher's Island for grazing goats and cattle, and began to build a grand house overlooking the new town.

In 1654, his activities and responsibilities included: Head Magistrate of Pequot (New London), owner of a livestock ranch on Fisher's Island, owner of a large sawmill (which the town had built for him), a Magistrate of the Connecticut Colony in Hartford, assistant of the General Court of Massachusetts and the only physician in New England. He also found the time to avert war between the Dutch and English colonies and between the Mohican, Narragansetts and everybody grabbing the land from under their feet. He was also constantly fussing with plans for saltworks and iron founderies, speculating in real estate and corresponding vigorously, often using Indian runners when urgency called for it, with leaders such as **Roger Williams**, John Endicott and **Peter Stuyvesant**, also with intellectual leaders and scientists in Europe.

He was also a founding commissioner of the 'United Colonies'. This political body had two representatives from each colony, Massachusetts, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven (Rhode Island was a special case, partly because **Roger Williams** was forbidden by law to enter Boston and partly

because the other colonies hoped to expand into Rhode Island territory, erasing that municipality) and met once per year in a different colony each year.

**Winthrop** took up medicine at the age of 40. He concocted a 'rubila' of nitre, antimony and salt of tin which allegedly cured **Roger William's** daughter **Mary** of a virulent disease that nearly killed her. She recovered and married **John Sayles** and had a number of children. As in homeopathy, the medicine at the time involved the discrete use of poisons, mostly in the form of the metals arsenic and antimony. There is no record that **Winthrop** used arsenic in his elixirs, but antimony, a bright silvery element, was credited with curative powers when used sparingly. This practice is linked to homeopathy.

The colonies in the area were all competing to attract **Winthrop** to their town. New Haven won the contest for a time, and **Winthrop** moved there with his growing family to supervise the construction of yet another ironworks, this time in the bogs north of the town. The town fathers of Hartford then lured **Winthrop** to their settlement by electing him governor of the Connecticut colonies, which included New London but not New Haven. The term was limited to one year, which was Connecticut law at the time, and **Winthrop** took months to reply to the Connecticut legislature. New Haven, under the high and mighty Rev. John Davenport, protested bitterly over losing their star. As was his habit, **Winthrop** left the New Haven ironworks he had founded for others to manage.

Within a year the Connecticut legislature had rescinded the term-limit law, and **John Winthrop Jr.** was now governor of Connecticut for as long as he wanted the post, and as it turned out, whether he wanted it or not. As governor of Connecticut he was inspired like **Roger Williams** before him to, again, head for London, this time to obtain a charter for his colony. This was partly due to the ongoing border disputes over the land of the Narragansett Indians between Rhode Island and Connecticut. **Roger Williams**, having already obtained his charter, though unfortunately not a Royal charter, had the upper hand. However, in Whitehall the Puritans were out and the royalists were back in power, so Rhode Island had to go through the grueling and expensive process all over again. They would hire Dr. Clarke as their agent, and he would spend his employment crossing legal and diplomatic swords with **John Winthrop Jr.** in London, mostly over jurisdiction of the Narragansett lands west of Narragansett Bay. This contest lasted almost two years, always ending in a draw, and flaming up sporadically over the next decades.

**Winthrop** prepared for his trip by buttering up and sugar-talking, by correspondence, the new King, Charles II, and his bureaucracy. Some of **Winthrop's** political art and style can be seen in his actions when two regicides, participants in the trial of the king's father Charles I, could not obtain a royal pardon and fled to New England. They were expelled from Boston, fleeing their pursuers came through Hartford from whence **Winthrop** sent them on to New Haven. He betrayed them to their pursuers, knowing that in Whitehall he would be seen as loyal, he was confident that the regicides would not be caught, but

that New Haven would be looked on with disfavor. This balance of perception and reality would later serve his empirical purposes in London.

In the late spring of 1661 **Winthrop** set out from Hartford by boat. The governor of New Haven, William Leetes, was standing haplessly on the beach waving an application for a New Haven charter for Winthrop to pick up and promote in Whitehall, but the sloop carrying the governor sailed right by, heading down the sound towards New Amsterdam, where **Peter Stuyvesant** had a flotilla standing by, waiting to take the Connecticut governor to Europe. Following again the lead of **Roger Williams**, **Winthrop** went by way of New Amsterdam, rather than leaving from Boston, and why he did this is historically important. If, as I've heard, meaning comes from consequence, then he already had plans to drive the Dutch out of the Hudson Valley. The decision to visit New Amsterdam and meet the Dutch director, a friend and correspondent, seems very deliberate and probably stemmed from a combination of imperialist impulses, curiosity, and whatever reason **Roger Williams** gave him in whatever correspondence they shared. He must also have wanted to avoid drawing attention in Boston to his trip and the reason for it. **Winthrop's** second oldest son **Wait** may have accompanied him, since he showed up in London later during the battles over the charter.

On Manhattan, **Peter Stuyvesant** greeted **Winthrop** as a head of state, with canons firing 27 pounds of powder, and his troops in formation. The General was thrilled to be in the presence of political power other than his own. **Stuyvesant** welcomed **Winthrop** warmly, showed him the town, including fortifications and troop deployments, not guessing that this slight, unassuming guest was scheming a plan for the military takeover of New Netherlands, to subsume the entire province into his Connecticut colony. It was in fact the first time that **Stuyvesant** had entertained a distinguished visitor, other than the local chiefs, and what choice did he have but to make an impression? **Winthrop** was honored by **Stuyvesant** with a Dutch military salute also on leaving New Amsterdam.

It was a brutal trip across the Atlantic to Holland, during which **Winthrop** busied himself drawing plans of the Dutch fortifications. Landing in Amsterdam he immediately sailed to the Hague where his cousin George Downing (son of Emmanuel Downing, a member of the first graduating class of Harvard College in Boston, also a cheap and conniving man) was the English Ambassador. Downing poured over the drawings and notes. **Winthrop** then sailed on to Restoration London where Charles II had just been installed on the throne. In the quiet, dignified, respectful style he had inherited from his father, **Winthrop** worked his way into the King's circle. He patiently reworked his application for a patent until the wording was unassailable.

During this time in London **Winthrop** kept exalted company, and this company in turn appreciated the company of the Connecticut governor, designating him an OriginalFellow of the Royal Society. He was the only

American among that distinguished body of scholars and scientists, which included Isaac Newton and John Milton. **Roger Williams** was a mutual friend of **Winthrop** and Milton, and Isaac Newton formed an almost spiritual alliance with **Winthrop**. The two co-wrote alchemical tracts under a pseudonym.

This time in London was also spent fighting protracted battles with Dr. Clarke, the agent representing Rhode Island, over who ruled the western shores of Narragansett Bay. The jurisdiction of this area fell in the eyes of Winthrop under a mysterious document called the 'Warwick Patent' which no one had ever seen, also the land had been bought by slight of hand by a group of businessmen, which included **Winthrop** (the Atherton Company), from the Narragansett chief Ninigret.

All the New England colonies at the time had representatives in London trying to finesse a royal charter for their colonies. **Winthrop** was the first to submit an authentic petition directly to the king in council. (pg 222 the Younger John Winthrop Robert C. Black III Columbia University Press)

**Winthrop's** application for a Connecticut charter 'passed the seals' in fine form, and he emerged with a grand document dripping with ribbons and covered with fancy signatures and seals, granting his colony in Hartford not only control over the united Connecticut colonies, starting at Narragansett Bay, including New Haven, but also all the land from the Massachusetts border on the north to the Atlantic Ocean on the south (meaning the south shore of Long Island) and, a continent away, the Pacific Ocean to the west, signed and sealed by the King of England and various members of the Privy Council and the Council on New England.

**Winthrop** was a realist, but he must have had some visceral response to this bestowal. A lesser man would have seen this charter as a coronation, but the Connecticut Governor saw these boundaries as bargaining positions, not established domains.

Clarke, speaking on behalf of Rhode Island, complained that Winthrop 'injuriously swallowed up half our Colonie.' **Peter Stuyvesant** reacted to the intelligence report in more violent language, another in a long line of betrayals by his English neighbors.

The jurisdiction over the tribal home of the Narragansett Indians remained a bitter, drawn-out dispute that kept **Winthrop** in London for years, leveraging his New England properties to raise funds for this protracted battle of patience. To finance his activities on behalf of Connecticut, he put up over 50,000 acres and virtually all his sheep and goats as collateral on a loan. This he had in common with **Roger Williams**, and also his father, men who paid a steep personal price for their political activities on behalf of their colonies.

The Connecticut charter made its way across the seas to a meeting of the United Colonies, where it was read to the astonishment of the New Haven delegates. This was how they learned of Winthrop's plans to annex their colony. In Hartford the charter was received with joy, and word spread among the

inhabitants of Long Island, both Dutch and English, that they were now under Connecticut jurisdiction, that is subjects of Gov. **John Winthrop Jr.** Still in London, he defended his charter with 'gracious imprecision'

On his return voyage he worked on celestial navigation and taking water samples to report back to the Royal Society. On his return to Hartford, June 1663, there were more than a few fires to be doused, which he extinguished in classic **Winthrop** fashion, by letting them burn out.

Over the next few years, with this charter as inspiration, **Winthrop** steadily eroded the Dutch control over Long Island, Westchester and the Bronx, despite previous treaties, infuriating **Stuyvesant**, who stormed up to Boston and addressed a meeting of the United Colonies with barely contained outrage. At this time the loyalties of almost every freeman in every town on Long Island, Connecticut and Westchester, not to mention western Rhode Island, was in flux, causing endless debates, haggings, charges of treason and duplicity flying back and forth among competing claimants. The political situation had all the makings of morass that could only be resolved by a warlord through military power, but **Winthrop** had more effective weapons than ever were wielded by a conqueror: endless patience and charm. In all the birthing struggles of this crucial decade not a shot was fired in anger, and that was **John Winthrop Jr.'s** finest achievement. He accomplished this by the brilliant use of obfuscation, writing flattering and conciliatory pronouncements that never actually committed to anything. He had great skill at dropping out of sight just as discussions turned belligerent. As a medical man he was skilled at feigning illness when it suited him.

In 1664, though **Winthrop's** charter included the Dutch province of New Netherlands, which was his dream of empire, it was then still very much under Dutch control. Certainly the battles for territory fought in the back rooms of Whitehall had drawn undue attention to the fledging and hitherto independent colonial governments, especially the attention of Prince James, Duke of York. A military man and a Catholic convert, York at this time was beginning to go military on the Dutch. Though the two countries were not at war, he began raiding Dutch trading posts, with an eye to robbing their trade, most specifically the profitable slave trade that operated from ports in West Africa. It is not clear whether **Stuyvesant** knew of these raids, having been assured that England and the United Netherlands were at peace. However, the British bureaucrats and bean counters saw the conquest of Manhattan as a financial necessity due to the growing volume of trade that flowed through the island. It was also, in their view, important to keep the Dutch colony out of the hands of **John Winthrop Jr.** All the New England colonies should, in their view, be governed by a proven loyalist. Ever accommodating, Charles II bestowed on his brother Prince James, Duke of York, a new charter, specifying the entire Hudson Valley all the way to the Connecticut River, and including, peripherally, all the Americas from Maine to Virginia. It seems possible that James, learning of **Winthrop's** charter, had

decided he wanted what had been given. I can imagine the Duke bursting into the throne room, insisting that if anything was to be granted, it should be granted to him, not to that conniving Puritan.

Colonel Richard Nicholls was rewarded for his long service to James by his appointment as New England's first Governor General. He was assigned a substantial flagship, the Guinea, and three lesser vessels, plus a force of arms including 400 marines.

**Winthrop** instigated the gradual disintegration of New Netherlands by persuading the English in the mainland and Long Island settlements who were ostensibly loyal to **Stuyvesant** to switch their allegiance to Connecticut, and to pay taxes to Hartford. **Stuyvesant** was furious at his traitorous former friend (he was often furious), and begged the company back in Holland to send ships and troops to protect his colony. The response of the West Indies Company and Their Mightinesses the States General was an assurance that things were fine between England and the Netherlands.

Nicholls' squadron first touched down in Boston, where the announcement was made to the horrified Puritans that they were now subjects of the Duke of York, a Catholic. The long-dreaded Governor-General had finally arrived. Then on a bright day in May, 1664 the British squadron dropped anchor in the shelter of Coney Island. **John Winthrop Jr.** was on Long Island and his Connecticut and Long Island militias were amassing near the Brooklyn shore. As the most powerful political figure in New England, it was his job to negotiate the terms of surrender with **Peter Stuyvesant**, who had just rushed down from Fort Orange where he was trying, desperately and unsuccessfully to foment the Mohawks to rise against the English. **Winthrop** met with Nicholls and the two worldly men got along famously, having friends in common in the Royal Society. **Winthrop** wrote the terms of surrender, guaranteeing the Dutch all the rights and ownerships that they currently enjoyed. Nicholls signed the articles, despite the fact that they were far more generous to the Dutch than his orders stipulated, and **Winthrop** was rowed across the East River to meet with **Stuyvesant**.

The greeting must have been awkward for both men. The General was not in a good mood and his guest was not given military honors this time. They retired to a waterfront tavern in the State House, and **Winthrop** presented the terms neatly written out on a document, essentially outlining the transfer of power. **Stuyvesant** ripped up the document and threw the pieces to the ground. Someone present picked up the pieces and rewrote the document, eventually reading it aloud to the people gathered outside the tavern. As the squadron sailed past the fort with its guns primed and ready to blast the city to pieces, **Stuyvesant** accepted the terms from **Winthrop** and the white flag ran up the pole, replacing the standard of their Mightinesses the States General.

The terms were later renegotiated at **Stuyvesant's** farm in the presence of **Oloff Van Cortland**, representing the waterfront and merchant trade, and

**Jeremias van Rensselaer**, as president of the civil council. The terms were generous, nothing would change but sovereignty.

It was soon after that **Winthrop**, in private conversation with Nicholls, ceded any charter claim to the islands, including Manhattan and especially Long Island, most of which was under **Winthrop's** jurisdiction. In exchange **Winthrop** drew the border of Connecticut at West Chester, where it remains after some shifting over the years. This was done strictly between two enlightened men, and in the ensuing negotiations between the Connecticut Assembly, the Royal Commissioners and the United Colonies **Winthrop** at no point let anybody know that he and Nicholls had already worked the details out between them. Everything evolved in the patented **Winthrop** manner, that is slowly and graciously. It is interesting to note that the Long Islanders desperately and vocally wanted to remain under Connecticut rule. Fishers Island was given to **Winthrop** as a manor, which made it, since Connecticut was not really part of England and therefore baronial grants were not valid, part of New York, not Connecticut. He gave Long Island to the British and got in exchange a British title, first Lord of the Manor of Fisher's Island, where the area code is 631, same as my mother's in Huntington L.I.

The border disputes and travel and responsibilities were tiring him and wrecking his personal business, and he tried repeatedly to resign his governorship. Always he was refused. He imposed the first speed limit, a fine of five shillings to those who ride through town too fast. Next time I'm stopped in Connecticut I'll know who to thank.

When a woman Katherine Harrison of Wetherfield was found guilty by a jury of being a witch and sentenced to hang, **Winthrop** intervened, had her pardoned and freed.

The hapless New York Gov. Lovelace and his chief deputy **Mathias Nicoll** were visiting the stricken **Winthrop** in Hartford when news came that a large Dutch naval force had taken Manhattan and renamed it New Orange (this regime change lasted less than a year, when the large Dutch naval force left and the province was returned to the English by treaty). **Winthrop's** last years in office were filled with such events, combined with the Connecticut Assembly constantly rejecting his letters of resignation. He handled these crises in the same style, a virtuoso politician to the last. He sent his eldest son Fitz with a militia to defend, successfully, eastern Long Island, where most towns still looked to **Winthrop** as their leader. His policy was to always avoid any use of force except as a show of strength and determination, and the Dutch incursion remained stressful but bloodless. When peace was made between England and Holland the Dutch withdrew.

The last year of **Winthrop's** life saw two major crises. The new governor of New York, Andros, was under orders from the Duke of York to extend the bounds of his jurisdiction to the Connecticut River, as stipulated by the Duke's charter,

which, from the royal point of view, superseded the **Winthrop** Charter. With flattering and supportive language, **Winthrop** obfuscated and delayed action, frustrating Andros to the point where he sent a troop of British soldiers by ship to Saybrook at the mouth of the Connecticut River. The fort, built decades earlier by Lion Gardiner (then in the employ of **John Winthrop Jr**) held a newly arrived company of militia. Andros' troops stayed on board for a few days but could not land or pass up the river, and they returned to Manhattan frustrated. The border between Connecticut and New York remained as it had been, and no firearms were discharged.

The next crisis was King Phillips War, which started among the Wampanog in Plymouth territory and spread to western Massachusetts and northern Connecticut. **Winthrop** and **Roger Williams** were both trying to prevent any incitements among Indian populations that had not yet risen up, specifically the Narragansett.

His usual response to common threats to the colonies was to call a meeting of the United Colonies, and he sailed to Boston with his daughters (his wife **Elizabeth** had died years earlier) going around the Nantucket shoals so as to avoid the now dangerous overland routes. To the Council he strongly urged caution and restraint in any action against the Narragansett, having counseled the aging chief Ninigret in the same way. Unfortunately the Articles of Confederation, which he had helped write, provided for the rule of majority in the council and **Winthrop** was outvoted. A military expedition ensued and the Great Swamp Massacre was the result.

The ailing **John Winthrop Jr.** went into an irreversible decline that not even his rubila could cure, and he died in Boston in February 1676, at seventy years of age, still governor of Connecticut, still commissioner of the United Colonies, still a member of the Royal Society, still the only medical man in Connecticut, still an assistant to the court of Massachusetts Bay, still Lord of the Manor of Fisher's Island.

The success of the United States is in large part due to the type of men the early settlers chose as leaders. In the case of **John Winthrop Jr.** the democratic idea was instilled with the unique quality that the chosen leader had to serve whether he wanted to or not, which was related to noblesse oblige but gave a new kind of entitlement and assurance to the voting population (freemen). The idea that great things could be done with great leaders, economies developed, borders established, tyrants expelled, peace reigning over chaos, was the legacy of **John Winthrop Jr.**, a man like his father, like **Roger Williams** and a handful of others who stood up to the strongest military power on earth, the British Crown, and maintained jurisdiction over their colonies without firing a shot, holding precious the dignity and wellbeing of their constituents. The events of a century later were an expression of yearning for this time of freedom, and the United Colonies, with its Articles of Confederation, was a model for the current U.S. government.

**John Winthrop Junior's** Fisher's Island summer residence is still occupied. The island was given to him as a baronial grant by Richard Nicholls, in recognition of his help in the takeover of New Netherlands, also in exchange for ceding Long Island to the British. A key question remains why Fisher's Island is part of New York State, rather than Connecticut, where its owner was the Governor. The answer is revealing: Connecticut was an independent colony, and the Lords of Whitehall could not bestow grants on land over which their jurisdiction was questionable.

This changes my impression that the original colonies were English. They were certainly settled by Englishmen, but they were independent from the various governments in Whitehall, and any jurisdiction over them would have to be taken by force, which the British Navy was reluctant to do.

### Family Connection:

EIGHT

### THE VIRGIN WIDOW

*Robert Livingston sat in the high-bourgeois anteroom of the Patroon's house, on the corner of Pearl Street in Albany, sharing small talk, in Dutch, with the other town notables assembled for the latest news on the health of the Rev. Nicholas van Rensselaer, on his sick bed upstairs. The ailing reverend, Livingston's employer and the nominal Patroon of Rensselaerswick was ordained in the Church of England, and was not popular either among the Dutch Reform clergy or the political establishment. He owed everybody money, and his patroonship had been usurped by Maria Van Rensselaer, widow of his brother Jeremias, so the assembled were not there out of personal or political concern. Livingston was there because one of the hats he wore was secretary to the Rev. Nicholaas.*

*Nicholaas's young wife, nee Alida Schuyler, the pretty daughter of Magritta van Slechtinhorst and Pietre Schuyler, came to the door of the anteroom and motioned to speak to young Robert Livingston. Alida was extremely attractive in*

*the eyes of the rugged Scotsman, and made more so by the rumor that her marriage to Rev. Nicholaas had never been consummated. She told the gentlemen that her husband was asking for someone to take down his will, and Robert picked up his large leather-bound valise and followed her upstairs. The notables exchanged glances.*

*Alida ushered him through the bedroom door and closed it behind him. Inside, the thick perfumed air almost knocked him over. There on the ornate bed, in a cloud of lace lay the wan Nicholaas, his eyes closed. Tables beside the bed held numerous colored vials of medicines reflecting the dim candlelight, and two medical malpractors dressed in sober black, muttering confidences. They looked up as Robert entered the room. Nicholaas stirred, his eyes opened and he suddenly shot up from his prone position, white as a ghost, trembling, a diamond-and-pearl-ringed finger pointing at the newcomer. "Not him!" he cried, "He's going to marry my widow!" and then Nicholaas Van Rensselaer went into shock and fell back on the pillows, dead.*

**Alida Schyuler and Robert Livingston** have maybe half a million descendents, living and dead, but few know their story, set in the quaint Dutch town of Albany, near the confluence of the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers. Albany, and all the land for a day's ride, was still owned by the van Rensselaers, and by now the reader should be familiar with Rensselaerswyck, the largest and oldest of the original Dutch manors in New Netherlands, founded by **Kiliaen van Rensselaer**. The van Rensselaers maintained a grip on the manor even after **Lord Kiliaen** had died, after **Stuyvesant** had come and gone, and the English had taken control of the entire eastern seaboard. Three sons of **Kiliaen**, Johannes, **Jeremais** and Nicholaas, were sent from Amsterdam to run the manor and hopefully intermarry with the local upper crust. **Jeremais** married **Maria**, the daughter of **Olaf van Cortlandt**, setting an example for future generations.

Albany (ne Beverswick) continued as the center of the rich Dutch/Iroquois fur trade after the British takeover, and the English fortune hunters found it impossible to break into the business. The native trappers brought in beaver and other forest innocents from any part of the vast wilderness that a canoe could reach by river. The site for the town had been carefully chosen.. Albany was near the confluence of the Hudson and the Mohawk rivers, a magnet for hustlers and opportunists.

In Amsterdam the van Rensselaer family would soon act to save the family fortune and reputation from a gay scion's extravagant lifestyle. Thus was Nicholaas shipped off to Albany on the death of **Jeremias**.

Nicolaas van Rensselaer was gay, flamboyant, mystical, infuriating. As an ordained minister in the Anglican Church, in Amsterdam, he had wormed his way into the exiled Prince's inner circle. His religious fervor matched his love of jewels and finery, and nothing pleased him more than his sycophantic friendship with Prince Charles Stuart, who had been exiled to the Netherlands after the

decapitation of his father, Charles I by Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentarians. But the Prince would eventually ascend to the throne as Charles II, an event that was predicted by Rev. Nicholaas. A mystic vision had come to Nicholas in the thralls of devotion; "You shall be King, my lord, God has willed it" he told the Prince, no doubt with a deep curtsy and a flourish of his feathered hat. When this prophecy was made it did not look very likely to transpire, but the Prince took interest, and by the time this story took place the Charles II had been King of England for a number of years, actually the last King of England to have real royal power over Parliament. Charles' brother James was next in line to the throne and became a patentee of the former Dutch province of New Netherlands, which included the city of New York, plus Albany and the patroonship of Rensselaerswyck.

The congregations of Albany were strictly Dutch Reformed, and they hated Rev. Nicolaas, despite his social connection to their new overlord, the Catholic James Duke of York and Albany.

Simultaneous to this shipping out of Reverend Nicholaas across the Atlantic, in 1673, came another character in our story, the young **Robert Livingston** (1654-1728), from the same origin, Holland, to the same destination, Albany, but by a different route. **Robert** had grown up in Rotterdam, son of Rev. John Livingston, a fiery Scottish puritan preacher, exiled by the decree of Archbishop Laud.

Like most Puritans, the elder Livingston could not swear allegiance to King Charles I because of the King's papist sympathies and Catholic wife, and the outspoken cleric had to leave the British Isles. He first set out for Massachusetts in 1634, on invitation from his friend **John Winthrop**, but a violent storm blew him back to Scotland. As the storm ripped the sails and tore off the rudder, the **Rev. John Livingston** gave the Lord twenty four hours to calm the storm; the wind only blew harder. The boat made it back to shore and the divinity was thanked, grudgingly. But the preacher was never a conciliatory man and he always found new targets for his blistering tongue. Eventually after scolding Oliver Cromwell to his face in a sermon in London, (the usual puritan-speak, telling God what to do: "God be gracious to those whose right it is to rule in this place, and unjustly is thrust from it."..a loyalist sentiment, supporting Charles I, from a man who wasn't loyal to anybody) and then, during the Restoration, refusing to swear allegiance to the new King, Charles II, he was exiled to Rotterdam with his wife and children.

This is where **Robert Livingston** grew up. His pockets already jingling with guilders earned from small business opportunities on the teeming docks of Rotterdam, by sixteen Robert had made enough money in the small shipping business free time from his studies to seek his fortune. The death of his father freed him to bring his mother back to Scotland and sail to Boston. He had a clever, disciplined, contentious and ambitious spirit, and he had a connection with

the powerful Winthrop family. **John Winthrop** admired the senior **Livingston**, and this connection would benefit **Robert** throughout his life.

The religious atmosphere in Boston was too thick for **Robert**, and the fur business too thin. The Dutch in Albany held the important cards in the fur trade but there was no way an Englishman could do business in Albany, however **Robert Livingston** spoke Dutch, and was a Scot, not an Englishman, and that opened up all kinds of possibilities. These possibilities were not lost on a merchant of Boston, John Hull, who engaged the young man, newly arrived from Holland, as an agent and paid his way to Albany.

The Dutch in Albany survived because of the business contracts with the Iroquois, which included the Mohawks of the Hudson Valley. The Natives supplied the pelts, the Dutch shipped them down to New York where the merchants of various nationalities would trade them on the international market. That and piracy were the two main industries of New York City, and they were both very profitable.

In French Canada the Huron tribes were allied with the Catholic French, through the same sort of fur-trading arrangements, and of course Catholics/Protestant relations were not amicable. War with the neighbors to the north was always a threat, and Albany was the unprotected town that stood between Montreal and New York City. The job of defending Albany was split between the British overlords, who garrisoned troops at the former Fort Orange, and the local constables

Once he was settled in the Dutch town, **Livingston** started working towards his goals in life, using a potent arsenal of charm, a fluency in Dutch, the standard Dutch education in accounting and secretarial skills, mixed with Latin and soon Iroquois and Mohican tongues. His eye was always on the players, who had the power to help him. His acquisition instincts were directed at the skins of the poor beavers and from them to real estate, like **John Jacob Astor** one hundred years later A man without property was not a gentleman, no matter how rich he was.

Within two years of his arrival, the Dutch-speaking **Robert** had secured three vital positions to assist his advancement: secretary to the town of Albany, ambassador to the Indian nations, and most important to this story, secretary to the new Patroon, The recently arrived Patroon, the dark-silk clad Rev. Nicolaas, had no ability or taste for administrative work and desperately needed somebody with drive and executive talent to manage the affairs of the manor. The despised (he was church of England, not Dutch Reform) Rev. Nicholaas van Rensselaer, resided in the house on Pearl and State street with his new young wife.

**Alida Schuyler** at eighteen years old was by all accounts beautiful, intelligent and vivacious, but these qualities are not what attracted the far older Rev. Nicolaas. In fact he apparently wasn't attracted to her at all, since the marriage was unconsummated. It was an arranged marriage to produce heirs to the vast patroonship, since the Schuylers were the other powerful family in

Albany. But no heirs materialized.

What went through the minds of the young **Robert** and **Alida** when their eyes crossed in the Patroon's house is impossible to say, but what can be demonstrated is that the Patroon himself became suddenly ill. Perfumes and potions in colored bottles covered the tables of his richly curtained bedroom, and concerned burgers of Albany contributed comforting assurances of recovery, but the illness progressed, and finally Nicholaas struggled gasping onto one elbow and called for his secretary to take down his will.

After his death a will never materialized, so the patroon had died intestate. Eight months later **Robert Livingston** and **Alida Schuyler** were wed.

There has been a great deal of speculation about what really took place here.. Was there any foul play? What was in those colored vials beside the bed?

**Alida** and **Robert** inherited from Van Rensselaer huge debts and a very shaky claim to Rensselaerwyck. **Robert** managed over the next ten years to balance this claim against the debts, though the legal issues were staggering in their complexity. He also bought a 2000 acre plot of land on the eastern shore of the Hudson, off the local tribes, with the usual bundle of trade goods. This land purchase involved a patent, patiently applied for through the Governor of New York, which took only four years to travel through the corrupt officials, and thereby being blessed by the Crown, made **Livingston** First Lord of the Manor. This coincided with the Livingstons signing off on any rights to Rensselaerwyck (they kept the house in Albany). The land, because of this official blessing and who knows what slight of hand, quickly grew from 2000 to over 157,000 acres, all undeveloped wilderness between the river and the Massachusetts/ Connecticut border, just south of Hudson, N.Y.

It's hard to justify this land grab on moral grounds, much of it was stolen from the Ottonawa, Tamaranachquae, Maneetpoo and Wawanitsawa tribes. Later generations of Livingstons had trouble defending their titles against counterclaims. Later in this volume I call John Jacob Astor the first robber baron, but perhaps it was **Robert**, since he was a robber and a baron.

A manor needs a manor house and indentured farmers to work the still forested land, but also, with the feudal legal structure in place, it always needs an heir; hence the intense dynastic activity. The royal patent was an English Baronial Grant, complete with vassals, servitude, a 'day's riding', and a tax to the crown called quintrents. It also gave the Lord the right to appoint clergy. This is no longer used in real estate deals. The manor would be kept intact through the custom of primogenitor, the eldest son would inherit the manor and the business, and rest of the children would have to leave, to make their lives elsewhere. The Livingstons were now propertied, and of the sons Philip, **Robert**, and **Gilbert**, only Philip would inherit the Manor and the fur business.

The original manor house was on the south shore of the Jansen Kill, between Linlithgo and Tivoli. Livingston built docks on both sides of the Kill and

stopped often on his way between Manhattan, where he had a house and pier on the East River, and the old patroon's house in Albany where Alida stayed. Robert increased his influence, made powerful friends and enemies, and founded a dynasty. The Livingston land holdings spread to over one million acres by the end of the second generation.

**Alida and Robert** lived in the Patroon's house and had a number of children, including Philip, **Robert Jr.** and **Gilbert**. **Robert** spent the next twenty years litigating his wife's claim to Rensselaerswick and fighting off the creditors of his wife's late husband. Eventually he managed to settle his ongoing, debilitating (for **Maria Van Rensselaer**) war by trading any claims for Rensselaerswick and the Schuyler farms for a baronial grant for Livingston Manor, Under Governor Thomas Dongan. the patent for the manor was originally about four hundred acres, but it soon mysteriously expanded to the border of Massachusetts and Connecticut and grew to 160,000 acres in what is now Columbia and Dutchess counties.

Here another comparison can be made with the Astors: while the husbands were mostly away from home tending to the fur business and riding the dangerous shifting winds of political intrigue, crossing over the London and back, the wives were home tending the store and raising the children, providing the life-blood of managerial back-office support, lonely to the point of despair, vulnerable, but always with a total power of attorney for the business and a deep knowledge of the books. For Astor and Livingston, success and failure came in equal doses, with success slightly outweighing immanent disaster. It was Alida Livingston and Sarah Todd Astor who provided the backbone of the two organizations, both filling orders for beaver pelts etc. and placing orders for trade goods, but one hundred years apart. They also provided a steady stream of luck and emotional strength that the men drew on wherever they went, through a constant stream of letters. This tipped the scales in favor of staggering success.

Livingston spent more and more time in New York as he grew richer and more powerful, and only when they were in late middle age did **Alida and Robert** move together into a house on the Jansen Kill.

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In England the political pendulum was swinging back and forth between the vaguely catholic (Charles II, James II) and the vaguely protestant (William and Mary) with constant wars raging, and every time the situation changed it deeply affected who was governor of New York, since that office was a plum political appointment. The governor of New York could enrich himself through all kinds of back channels.

France was catholic, and what the citizens of Albany dreaded was an alliance between the crown and the French-Canadians to the north, since the town had no defenses. The only buffers were the Iroquois tribes. Enter the first villain, stage right: Jacob Leisler, a radical, rich Dutch minister who

first came to Livingston's attention ten years earlier when he attacked the religious views of Nicolaas Van Rensselaer. In New York City the citizens reacted to news of William and Mary's conquest of England by overthrowing the governor, and out of the chaos Leisler emerged and seized power. Livingston and Leisler hated each other. Livingston called him a Dutch boor and as the guy was already an angry self-righteous man, this did nothing to placate him. Class warfare, as opposed to the religious issues in Europe, turned Albany against New York, leaving the northern frontier very vulnerable. Livingston just could not abide Leisler, mostly because the guy acted like a provincial Dutchman and had no land holdings. Livingston was fast becoming a serious snob, though in this case everybody hated Leisler.

When Leisler sent troops to Albany for protection against the French-Indian threat massing on the border, Albany (Livingston and his friends) refused to garrison them, so they went back to New York. The next thing that happened was Schenectady was attacked from the north and burned to the ground, its citizens massacred. Albany suddenly decided they could tolerate the New York warlord, so they reluctantly let Leisler's troops take over the town. When some of these troops went to Livingston's house to arrest him and chain him to a dungeon wall, Livingston had fled to Connecticut. The troops then harassed Alida, searched the house and uncovered evidence of sedition in the form of a small cross.. a jesuit/papist symbol. It was probably planted. Livingston returned from Connecticut riding alongside Fitz-John Winthrop at the head of the Connecticut militia .. He rescued his family and whisked them off to Connecticut, waving in his hand a letter rescued from the mud of Schenectady, evidence that Leisler had been behind the massacre. Two could play the evidence game.

This show of force discouraged the French and they withheld further attacks. Leisler meanwhile holed up in the fort in New York, refusing to cede the city to the Royal fleet at anchor in the harbor. A battle ensued with the warships firing on the battlements, Leisler and his crowd shooting back and inevitably surrendering. Leisler was thrown in prison, tried for sedition and beheaded. Evidence later emerged that someone had gotten the new Governor drunk and persuaded him to sign the death warrant. After the deed was done, the governor received a mysterious cash award from a grateful party. Livingston watched the execution of his vanquished enemy, a subtle smirk playing on his face.

The new governor gave Livingston all his old appointments back, as well as the contract for 'victualizing' (feeding) the garrison of troops that were now protecting Albany. This is a lucrative deal as long as the governor who signed it is still alive, which he wasn't for long. Livingston was soon stuck with yet another antagonistic governor, Fletcher, with uncollectable debts and the daily necessity of feeding the garrison in Albany out of his own pocket. This untenable situation sent him to London on a cursed gale-blown ocean voyage that terminated with a wreck on the shores of Portugal with the crew and passengers barely alive. Robert managed to save his son and his shipment of beaver pelts, and finally

made it to London to get some intrigue done.

Robert Livingston was the backer of his good friend and fellow Scotsman William Kidd, a prominent merchant of Manhattan, and met in London with Kidd to arrange a voyage that promised enormous profits, allegedly to protect British shipping from pirates in the Indian Ocean. The proceeds, meaning the pirate booty, which was the real reason for the expedition were to be split with the crown, King William, (10% off the top) the other shares being divided between the crew (half) Lord Bellomont (a well-connected peer who had a strong relationship with Livingston), Kidd and Livingston, in proportion to their investment.

Unfortunately Kidd's pirates proved to be illusive. After a year of searching one third of his crew had died of cholera and Kidd now considered the pirates too dangerous to confront. But he had to appease his backers, and more importantly his mutinous, armed crew, who were working on commission, and his options were limited. His boat was also old and leaky so he set upon and took the Armenian trading vessel Auedagh Merchant and divided the rich cargo among his crew. The mogul Emperor of India complained to the East India Company, and word got back to London that Kidd had turned to piracy.

Livingston had actually written into the original contract a clause stipulating that if Kidd turned pirate, Livingston was entitled to a return on his investment from Lord Bellomont, amounting to 10,000lbs. The only explanation for this clause is that the voyage was conceived as a privateering expedition, which is indistinguishable from out and out piracy except in terms of the victims..if they came from a country not allied with England, it was privateering, otherwise ho ho and a bottle of rum.

Captain Kidd had a limited career as a pirate, perhaps four merchant ships taken in all, and since the crew were working strictly on commission Lord Bellomont and his rich noble friends barely made a profit on their investments, mostly in the form of treasure, buried by Kidd and dug up by Bellomont on Gardiner's Island in Eastern Long Island. By the time Kidd returned to New York to clear his name, Bellomont was the new governor general, holding court in Boston, which was very good for Livingston, who had practically engineered the appointment back in London, but very bad for Kidd: The besieged captain was ordered to Boston to give an account of his voyage. There he was arrested and put on trial in London, and since many lords were implicated as accessories in the crimes of Kidd, having backed him, they prosecuted Kidd all the harder, convicted and hung him in London a year later, not for the crime of piracy, since his crew would not implicate either him or themselves, but for slaying a mutineer with a bucket.

This situation was very dangerous for Livingston, who was probably holding some of the treasure at his estate in Clermont, so to prevent an arrest and worse having his baronial grant rescinded he charged up to Boston and bursting into the governor's office demanded the 10,000lbs from Bellomont. The

governor was completely taken aback, cancelled his plans to ruin Livingston, and let the situation blow over by doing nothing. The lords would have to accept their losses. Robert Livingston was a master of survival. It is unclear whether Livingston got a return on his investment, though Kidd made many secret and mysterious stops along Long Island Sound and on Block Island (Kidd's wife came from Block Island) on his way to Boston. At any rate he never implicated Livingston as an accessory.

The rumor is that Kidd buried part of the treasure under what is now the porch of the Narragansett Inn on Block Island, overlooking the inner harbor. People still dig up the Livingston estate looking for Kidd's treasure.

(As a spawn of this dynasty, I never would have known any of this if I hadn't decided to write about these ancestors, and not knowing any of my Livingston cousins I have never heard this discussed, nor really any other stories in this volume.)

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Robert of Clermont was the most educated, having been shipped to Edinburgh to learn the law. The eldest son, Philip inherited the Manor, the second son, John, was prepared to take over the business, and Robert 'of Clermont' got to be the judge. *His* son was called Robert 'the Judge' and *his* son was Robert 'the Chancellor', who accrued the spectacular resume outlined below.

The Livingstons dominated politics and commerce in the region, and on a national and international scale, but gradually the family lost influence, starting after the American Revolution. I have often wondered about this, since it happened to all the other family branches too, and Clare Brandt's book on the Livingstons came up with a good explanation: the Livingstons were, deep inside, oligarchal, baronial snobs who could not abide the democratic ideal, even though they signed the Declaration of Independence, fought for independence, even wrote much of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. But like many founding fathers, 'independence' meant freedom from English rule, not basic rights for anybody with a ticket on a boat.

It's the same reason they all intermarried, and the same reason that my tribe can trace it's ancestry to so many founding fathers: marriage to peers and relatives created a wall protecting them against the hoi polloi, the new immigrants, the new money. These all represented grave threats to their self-image and their power. For example, Robert R. 'the Chancellor' Livingston, a brilliant diplomat and jurist, childhood friend of John Jay, (who married Robert's cousin Sarah Livingston). Robert administered the oath of office to Washington in the first inauguration, and was the original envoy to France that bought the Louisiana Territories from Napoleon. He also backed Robert Fulton in the creation of the first steamboat, which was named the 'Clermont', after the Chancellor's estate on the Hudson River. When Washington chose John Jay over Robert 'the Chancellor' to be the first Chief Justice, Livingston was incensed and deeply insulted, but the reason was clear: he was an aristocrat, not a democrat. He was

a bad choice to protect the rights of the disenfranchised.

This works the other way, too.. why is there so little interest in the outside individuals who founded these dynasties, **Robert Livingston, John Jacob Astor** etc.? Because their names connote aristocracy and that is a negative connotation, even though they were self-made men, like John Jay. When I began to write this book, I made sure not to put the word 'aristocracy' in the title..nobody would buy it. When people talk about what America stands for, they rarely mention the landed aristocracy and it's intermarrying offspring, even though this has been a fairly influential group in the formation of the U.S.A.

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So why does Santa come down the chimney? Dec. 23, 1823, the Troy, N.Y. Sentinel publishes a Christmas poem that begins  
"T'was the night before Christmas,  
and all through the house,  
not a creature was stirring,  
not even a mouse.."

Authorship was not mentioned, and later Clement Clark Moore claimed he had written it. But Moore was a dreadful writer, turgid and nasty, and this poem was brilliant, the source of many of our myths about Santa Clause, including the round little belly, the reindeer with their wonderful names ('Dunder and Blixem', the original names of the reindeer, is Dutch for 'thunder and lightening') and the chimney entry. It was certainly written by Major Henry Livingston Jr. of the Poughkeepsie branch, and evidence can be found in the poem itself.

Many Livingston families lived for generations on the frontier, in what had been Mohawk territory. The Mohawks had treaties with the Dutch, but not with the English, and farmhouses shuttered the windows and doors at night to protect against Indian attack. Children and grownups would lie awake at night terrified of hearing a clatter on the roof, since that meant an invasion via the chimney, which in those days was quite a large thing and possible to descend.

How this transformed in Henry Livingston's subconscious into Santa's arrival on Christmas Eve night can only be guessed, but perhaps it was to allay the fears of children, to reassign the significance of roof-clatter so that they, and he, might go to sleep.

So I ask myself: why didn't Henry Livingston sign the poem? (Certainly if Moore had written it he would have signed it.) All I can do is speculate, but it seems consistent with a larger observation, that nobody has been famous for a while. If we put the 'lack of signature' in the same file drawer as 'lack of recent fame', we have something to think about. The candidates for an explanation would be, so far, 1. The anti-aristo gist of this country, and 2. The past as a huge

presence, in the form of history, myth, real estate, dark portraits, all calling for the same thing "leave me and my very private universe and what inherited wealth I have left alone", and though Henry Livingston had no inherited wealth and 12 children to support and amuse, he did not want fame intruding into his private universe.

Partly because of intermarriage, and partly because of a mad ancestor in the Scottish highlands, there seemed to be a high incidence of eccentricity among the Livingston descendants, especially the Chanlers. The Livingstons blamed this on the Astors, and the Astors blamed it on the Chanlers, and the Chanlers were too busy doing eccentric things (see 'Pride of Lions') to blame anybody. But there were definitely idiot genes floating around the gene pool. By now the gene pool has been cleaned by fresh blood, cousins are no longer marrying each other and giving their children names like 'Livingston Livingston', so madness is no longer an issue.

However, the family has had some presence in recent centuries. Eleanor Roosevelt was a Livingston. It is revealing that the Aldriches at Rokeby, a family mansion on the Hudson near Rhinebeck, tell of growing up without a TV or a speedboat. However, the caretaker and his family did have these things, so they were available.

The moral: This is the land of opportunity, but only strivers with nothing to lose can take advantage of this. Also: being descended from these founders doesn't mean you have a TV or speedboat. Maybe a leaky old mansion with back taxes due, and too much pride to get a normal job.

**Family connection:** There are, due to intermarriage, a number of connections between the Chanlers and the Livingstons, but the main one is through Robert R. 'the Judge' Livingston, grandson of Robert the First, whose daughter Alida married John Armstrong (Secretary of War during the War of 1812). Their daughter, Margaret, married William B. Astor.

Their daughter Emily married 'Uncle' Sam Ward, a banker's son and older brother of Julia Ward Howe. Emily died in childbirth, but her daughter Maddie lived just long enough to spawn the 'Astor Orphans'. My great Grandfather, Winthrop Chanler was the second oldest of this eccentric mob.

There are more connections to the Van Rensselaers, the Schuylers and the Van Cortlandts, but that's on the Smith side of the family (Bessie Smith was married to Stanford White)

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NINE

ELEVEN

FEUDAL TIMES (intermarriage)

TWELVE

**REVOLUTION**

Generals Armstrong, Ward, Francis Marion (the Swamp Fox)

THIRTEEN

**FRANCE**

The ambassadors and ministers to France in the early years of our country included

Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, **John Armstrong**, Robert Livingston, James Monroe

One common theme among these founders was the successful establishment of residential forts at the mouths of major rivers. For **John Winthrop** it was the Charles, for **Stuyvesant** it was the Hudson, for **John Winthrop Jr.** it was both the Thames and the Connecticut, for **Killiaen van Rensselaer** it was the Mohawk. For **John Jacob Astor**, it was the Mississippi and the Columbia.

The key to the commercial exploitation of the continent was, as Astor well knew, the Mississippi, and the residential fort at the mouth was New Orleans.

His son and commercial heir, **William Backhouse Astor**, was married to **Margaret**, the daughter of **Gen. John Armstrong**, who at this time was Ambassador to France, and **Alida Livingston**. The big question for both **Astor** and Thomas Jefferson was who owned New Orleans? Was it the French or the Spanish?

## FOURTEEN

### KING OF THE WILD FRONTIER

*The meeting of the Beaver Club of Montreal was coming to order, empty bottles of expensive French wines and exhausted beer pitchers were cleared and replaced by flagons of white Cognac. The French trapper lounged magnificently, looking like a rock star with his flowing mane and buoyant confidence. His large Cree-made fur coat made a throne of his chair and two beautiful native girls sat quietly by his side in beaded deerskin shifts. The English traders dressed more like businessmen, in silk suits with silver buckles, keeping their thoughts to themselves as they puffed their pipes. Mostly these thoughts were about a looming threat to their business, and as the party settled down, the double doors suddenly opened and there was the threat, in person, unbuttoning a dusty otter-skin coat. The party rose to its feet and welcomed him, all except some former partners who held grudges towards the threat, having been bested in some past business dealing; they remained seated as the newcomer was offered the chair at the head of the table. Before sitting down, the threat addressed the assembled in his soft German accent. His purpose was to convince them that he had no designs on the Northwest Territories, and this came as a great relief to those who believed him.*

**John Jacob Astor's** life was an arc of steadily rising fortune and power. He is famous for many things, but his greatest accomplishment is almost forgotten: the founding of the first American settlement on the Pacific coast. The story of Astoria is a great tale of conquest, how America's first great tycoon tried, and briefly succeeded in taking control over half the continent. The territory involved, four times the size of Europe, was the untapped, unexplored western wilderness, mapped out only by tribal borders and defined by great geological barriers like the Rocky Mountains, the Pacific Ocean, the Mississippi River, the Columbia River and the Great Lakes. Its unlimited natural wealth was awaiting

exploitation, first come first served, and John Jacob Astor was, while barely leaving his Pearl Street, N.Y.C. office/warehouse, basically the first on the west coast.

**Astor** late in life related this story to his friend Washington Irving, who laid it out in meticulous detail in two volumes called "Astoria; or, Anecdotes of an Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains." and this was condensed by Edgar Allen Poe into a short story, "Astoria". It was from Poe's writing that I first learned about this, though my subsequent research went to many other sources.

The tiny bit of information in a compact encyclopedia represents all that anybody in the family seems to know about **Astor** or Astoria, but one doesn't get one's name in a compact encyclopedia without first doing something important. **Astor** was the first real tycoon produced by this country, but the wealth he created and put into Manhattan real estate has long since been dispersed, spent, evaporated, at least that of my branch of the family, by previous generations to mine (you know who you are! You didn't have to take **all** your hunting horses to Ireland and Scotland every year). Now the wealth lies in the following story.

It starts, as all these stories do, in Europe. The teenage Astor, an apprentice butcher in the Rhine village of Waldorf, Germany, disappoints his father by following his brothers to London, where he helped with the musical instrument business and picks up some English. In 1784 he then sails to New York City by way of Baltimore, meeting fur traders on board ship who fire his mind with a plan to make a fortune trading pelts on the international fur market. He has a handful of flutes to sell, but that's all he needs to start.

He did it the hard way, constantly in motion, moving from the New York docks to the lonely, backbreaking trails of the Allegheny Mountains, up and down from Montreal, off into the North West territories of the Great Lakes, off to London and France, his thick body taking all punishment, and relentless bargaining skills taking on all comers, and he very quickly became a top player in the fiercely competitive fur game.

I will relate as accurately as possible how from his Pearl Street office in New York City, he established a company settlement on the Pacific coast with the intention of monopolizing all trading in animal peltries in North America, really starting his own country. The expedition (of acquisition, trade rights, and the hunt for critters, not discovery) began two years after the Lewis and Clark expedition and concluded during the war of 1812 when the fort was sold, underhandedly, to the British. At the time these territories were not under the flag of any European, American or Asian nation, except the Indian nations, which unfortunately had no flag. All the territory between the Louisiana Territories and the Pacific Ocean, north of Spanish California was, in Astor's empirical view, up for grabs. Behind Astor's thick eyebrows and soft German accent were dreams of a grand Empire.

The main businesses of the new world was furs and leather, tobacco and rum, whether you were an adventurer, explorer, or empirical opportunist. The

markets of Europe and Northern China were consuming fresh beaver pelts for their felt hats, leather for their boots, fox and lynx for their collars, and, in China, sleek black otter for their Mandarin robes. The demand was always bigger than the supply, and had been for three hundred years. It was the trappers of French, English, Spanish, Dutch and Russian origin that befriended the natives, explored the upper rivers, instigated wars and signed treaties that divided up the continent among the European powers. The greatest explorer of all, Samuel de Champlain, was a fur trader. When Lewis and Clark wintered with the Nez Perce Indians, in 1805, many of their hosts were fluent in French. Of course many wars and treaties had to do with wars and treaties in Europe, and the American Revolution allegedly had to do with issues of independence, not animal skins, but it was the fur traders that dealt the cards in frontier politics.

That a German immigrant, a butcher's boy, came to dominate the industry, while competing successfully against powerful state-sponsored organizations like the Mackinaw Company, the North West Company, the Russian Fur Company, and the largest, the Hudson Bay Company, and various other rapacious organizations, is a story that, we will see, has a lot to do with why this country stretches from sea to shining sea, and also why there are so few beavers, lynx, martens, otter, muskrats, mink and fox in what's left of the wild.

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**Astor** made his first fortune buying furs in Montreal from the Northwest Fur Company and shipping them first exclusively to London, then, when the treaty of 1795 (the Jay Treaty, negotiated by John Jay) permitted it, to New York City and from there to markets in Europe and China. The big prize for a major furrier was the vast western wilderness and, in order to exploit its untold wealth, the Pacific coast, where ships could be built to take the pelts to China. The British had tried to mount an expedition across the continent to set up a fort and shipbuilding operation at the mouth of the Columbia as early as 1774, but this was prevented by the American Revolution.

In 1808, **Astor** having lost his bid to buy the Louisiana Territories, this plan for conquest of the west coast became his plan.

All the transcontinental exploration up to Lewis and Clark had been done by fur traders. Alexander McKenzie, a powerful Montreal furrier, had made a transcontinental expedition in 1793, but nothing remotely of this scope and ambition had ever been conceived by a private citizen. **Astor's** vision would make Napoleon blush: a vast commercial empire stretching from the Allegheny Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, dotted along the major rivers with trading posts and cumulating with a trading city at the mouth of the Columbia. The 'American Fur Company' was incorporated, officers appointed and capitalized with \$1,000,000. of **Astor's** money. The companies would later be known as the South West Company and the Pacific Fur Company, and for much of their incorporated existence the only stockholder was **John Jacob Astor**.

As a businessman, **Astor** knew better that to try on his Western crown just

yet; he knew the risks of his enterprise. The wilderness was teeming with armed trappers and Indians with competing loyalties, and some tribes, like the Blackfeet and the Sioux, had a dangerous dislike for the white interlopers. Also, he was competing with British and other expeditions out of Montreal and St. Louis. But beaver skins in London were worth ten times what they were in New York, and trinkets and old pots and pans, metal buttons, knives, rifles, and rum were worth ten times their European value to the pre-metal age wilderness tribes, as **Astor** had learned on his first Atlantic voyage to the States. These numbers, representing minimum 600% profits, justified all kinds of risks.

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The compelling thing about **Astor**, besides what he did and the staggering pile of money he made doing it, was the character that drove him. By 1790, six years after arriving in New York with nothing but his flutes: he now had a beautiful wife, Sarah Todd, a baby girl, a large building with living apartments upstairs and a thriving musical instrument store downstairs, ten lots in lower Manhattan, and a fast-growing fur business with agents and smugglers operating throughout the wilderness, with the best business connections from Fort William to Montreal to London. He also had a fortune in the bank. He was twenty seven years old and just getting started.

Besides playing Mozart on an old flute to placate Indian chiefs, he had no time or tolerance for self-indulgence. His pleasure was making money, doing the deal, and he'd paid his dues on the lonely trails and wild frontier trading posts, learning his business thoroughly, fiercely determined to dominate the industry. He was a good man in many ways, but there was a blind side to his ambition. He had no loyalty to the United States, in spite of a friendship with Jefferson and Madison, and no qualms about using cheap rum in trade with the natives. This had been strictly outlawed by the French *voyagers*, and forbidden by Washington and Jefferson, who were anxious to develop peaceful, regular commerce with the tribes. But liquor-for-fur was re-introduced by the British when they took control of the Canadian Provinces, and it does not speak well for **Astor** that he let the practice continue. He didn't lose much sleep over it, so essentially his business was to skin the innocent creatures and corrupt the native tribes, all in the name of profit. A robber baron was born, though investigation shows he was not the first, that robber barons were common in the New York area in the seventeenth as well as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (See **Livingston, van Rensselaer, Van Cortlandt**).

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There is a revealing legend about Astor that has been long forgotten, concerning 'Permit No. 68': Astor was in London in the winter of 1795-96, having concluded some profitable business with Backhouse, LTD, his chief agent there, (my ancestor, **Astor's** second son, was named **William Backhouse Astor**, after the principal.) He looked up an officer of the all-powerful East India Company who happened to be from Waldorf, Germany and who, over dinner, gave Astor a

permit to send a trading ship to China. Whether this permit had any value or authority is open to question, but Astor socked it away in a drawer. American ships had been trading with China since 1784, as Astor was well aware.

Sarah Astor kept urging her husband to trade with China, but Astor had no ship and not yet enough money to buy one, so, three years later, the legend goes, he pulled the permit out of his drawer and called on a shipper, James Livermore, who was having problems with British regulations and French Privateers in the West Indies. Astor dangled 'Permit No. 68' under his nose, offering it as his share in a joint expedition to China. Livermore would provide a ship, a crew, and a cargo, and the profits would be split down the middle. The permit was Astor's entire investment, and one morning eighteen months later, a cart carrying 55,000 Spanish silver dollars showed up at Astor's door, representing his half of the immense profits from the trading voyage.

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By 1798, **Astor** had also become an arms merchant, supplying shipowners, rebel armies, Indian tribes, and smugglers with all kinds of ordinance (this isn't the last time the family indulged in this business. See 'Chanlers'). His warehouse held a curious combination of furs, musical instruments and cannon balls, and he was growing very very rich.

So rich, in fact that he was scheming to buy the Louisiana territories from Napoleon, to resell them to the government at a tremendous profit. He tried to enlist his friend DeWitt Clinton, the governor of New York, who must have warned his uncle the vice president, and Jefferson, getting wind of this, hurriedly wrote Robert 'the Chancellor' Livingston, his envoy in Paris, to negotiate a deal and trump **Astor**. Since Livingston had too many ties to **Astor**, James Monroe was sent to France to complete the sale, soon to be known as the "Louisiana Purchase". (To this day there are Livingstons in New Orleans, one was recently the speaker of the House of Representatives, representing a district in New Orleans.)

The wilderness was always on **Astor's** mind, as was China. Because of loopholes in the payment of tariff duties, an eighteen-month suspension on tariffs allowed American shipping to compete with the East India Company and other powerful multinationals. **Astor** paid no tariffs on his import-export business to China, but bribes were another matter.

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Another story: In order to avert clashes with the British Navy on the high seas that might lead to war, Jefferson imposed an embargo on foreign trade, which meant that **Astor's** ship, the Beaver, was idle in New York Harbor. In 1808 President Jefferson was petitioned on behalf of a prominent, highly connected Mandarin Chinese merchant named Punqua Winchong, who was in Washington with his retinue, and who wanted to return to China by way of New York. This petition was endorsed by leading government officials, so permission was

granted, in spite of the embargo, and the Chinaman hired Astor's ship to transport him, his retinue, and his property (consisting of suspicious bales) back to Canton. Nine months later The Beaver returned from China laden with tea, fabrics, etc. for a profit of \$200,000., the Chinaman disappeared, and the New York merchants screamed in protest, since 'Punqua Wingchong' was obviously just a Chinese laborer picked up off the docks and dressed up in Astor's silks

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By the time Jefferson realized he had been taken for a ride, he had already given **Astor** approval on his plan to gain a monopoly on all the fur business in the North West territories. This petition was also a tissue of false representations, since Astor said he had a board of directors made up of the top businessmen in the industry. In truth, the board of the American Fur Company had only one member, **J.J. Astor**. **Astor** did not see the President of the United States as a superior in any way, but rather as a rival for control of the frontier. Jefferson, ignoring the evidence that identified **Astor** as a ruthless plutocrat, informed **Astor** by letter that he would welcome him as a neighbor if he ever succeeded in establishing a democratic state on the Pacific coast. **Astor's** ships and outposts flew the American flag, as well as the Astor pennant, but that was pure expediency, since they had to fly *some* flag.

Frontier politics were always based on the premise that trading posts were proxies for sovereign governments. If a French trading post stood at a certain juncture, that area was part of France, until a treaty reassigned the sovereignty. By decree of Queen Elizabeth I, land couldn't just be claimed, it had to be occupied. A fur trading post constituted a kind of occupation, since it implied trade agreements with the native tribes. Astor, not a patriot, figured that a fort on the Pacific Coast would give him sovereignty over any area his post could engage in trade and protect from interloping Canadians, British, Russians and rival fur companies. But any claim to sovereignty always strongly relied on trade agreements and attracting settlers. Astor was not inherently a proxy for the United States, but he knew some sovereign flag had to fly over the fort and trading posts, otherwise the British would simply claim the territory for their King. They did this anyway, flag or no flag.

The only friends of the U.S. in the world were the Russians, and they had a problem: traders along the Pacific Coast were swapping guns and rum for furs, (one wonders who these traders were working for) and the tribes in some areas were becoming dangerous neighbors to the Russian outposts. **Astor's** solution, via a petition to the Russian consulate, was for Russia to give him an exclusive contract to provision these posts, since he had ships all over the world, in exchange for exclusive rights to their fur business. **Astor's** ship would then take the furs to China, and take a cut of the business, plus a 10% freight fee. This part of the plan had been conducted successfully in Alaska by Captain Ebbets on the *Enterprise*, one of **Astor's** growing fleet. This arrangement, which would regulate all the trade up and down the coast, shutting out the independent traders who

were such a nuisance, would be interwoven into the master plan.

**Astor's** master plan was three or four-fold, involving opium from China to London as the final leg, but meanwhile he had to gain control of the Pacific.: a ship - the 'Tonquin'- outfitted with silent partners in his company, also carpenters, *voyagers* and provisions, would sail into the mouth of the Columbia River where a strong fort would be established. Simultaneously an expedition would proceed overland, starting in Montreal and following in general the path Lewis and Clark had laid two years earlier -but going by foot across the Great Plains rather than keeling up the Missouri through hostile Sioux territory. Eventually they would meet up with the sea expedition at the headquarters settlement at Astoria, having established minor posts along the wilderness route.

A vital link in this plan was the sanction of the government, which was denied to his competitors. **Astor** first petitioned De Witt Clinton, explaining that he was representing a consortium of businessmen. Clinton knew better, since he knew that Astor preferred to work alone, but he nevertheless pushed the bill through the legislature that incorporated the American Fur Company. Since Clinton's uncle was the Vice President, the sanction of President Jefferson was also obtained (this was shortly before the "Chinaman" scam), based on false information, and **Astor** was ready to roll, one step ahead of the British-Canadian companies.

\*

**Astor** was a master of smoke and mirrors, and he presented himself to people in government and in the fur trade with the sole intent of fooling them one way or another. This habit came back in his face as contracted employees began to deceive him. Many of his employees and officers were Scottish, English and French, most had never been in the U.S. for any time, and most had worked for **Astor's** competitors in Montreal, the Great Lakes and St. Louis. Also, **Astor** was considered a threat throughout the industry, especially in St. Louis, and many outfits refused to deal with his company. But he wasn't discouraged in any way, and his confidence and business skills filtered down through all his successful enterprises, arousing fear and respect.

Jefferson's shipping embargo was a disaster. In 1809, James Madison, by then the elected President, lifted the embargo. The paper was barely signed when **Astor's** ships flew from New York laden with furs and European goods, all bound for China and India, except for one, which headed for Russian-America (New Archangel) in order to mediate between the Russian fur settlements and China.

By 1810 **Astor** had taken control of most of the Canadian and American fur companies, except for the North West Company, his chief rival in the race for the Oregon. **Astor's** overland expedition was finally leaving from Montreal, ready to conquer the continent, heading to the Great Lakes, to Green Bay, down the Wisconsin River to the Mississippi and down to St Louis, where it would head for the Pacific along the Missouri River and across the Great Plains. Simultaneously

The Tonquin, a magnificent ship ringed with nine guns, laden with trade goods, voyagers, partners, and carpenters, set sail from New York, under Captain Thorn. Thorn had detailed orders to build a fort at the mouth of the Columbia, then proceed up the coast to trade for pelts, then, after returning to the fort, to sail for China to trade whatever furs had been collected. The master plan was in motion.

Some unfortunate choices of leadership and partners spelled disaster for **Astor's Western Empire**: some of his Montreal recruits were still loyal to Britain, the Captain of the Tonquin was incompetent and tyrannical, seething with arrogance, resentment and paranoia, and the leader of the overland expedition, Hunt, was neither knowledgeable, talented nor particularly brave. He later turned out to be a very competent trader, however.

The first sign of trouble occurred when the Tonquin arrived at the Falkland Islands to take on water. One boatload of travelers was late getting back to the ship, and Capt. Thorn weighed anchor and left them to frantically row after the ship. If the wind hadn't suddenly died they would surely have perished.

What is unclear is how such a cruel and stupid man could be recommended to **Astor** for command of an all-important mission, given that **Astor** had many highly regarded captains in his employ, such as Ebbets and Cowman. There was the threat of a showdown with a British warship, and Thorn was allegedly good at handling that sort of problem, but on the trip down the coast they were escorted by the U.S. Constitution, to ward off the British, and at any rate no trading vessel with nine guns and no gunners could prevail against an armed frigate, if I've read my Patrick O'Brian with any attention. However, the Tonquin could fend off a French privateer without much difficulty, so that must have been why Thorn was given the job. The fact that many of **Astor's** recruits on board the Tonquin were French-Canadian voyagers may have figured in the decision, since there was always the danger of a mutiny.

The next troubling incident occurred when the Tonquin stopped in Hawaii.. Two crewmen were severely flogged and thrown in the brig for being fifteen minutes late getting back to the ship, and one who was missing overnight was, on his return to the ship, practically flogged to death and thrown overboard to drown. He was saved by islanders and brought to shore. This extreme discipline was unique in a sailing vessel, merchant or military, Capt. Bligh notwithstanding.

At the mouth of the Columbia the spring tides were fighting the river current. The Columbia drains almost a thousand miles of Rocky Mountains as well as the Cascades, and the mouth of the river was a misty white water conflagration over miles of shoals. Capt. Thorn, with his alarming disregard for human life, sent boat after boat of crewmen into the chaos in search of a channel. Two boats perished, eight men in all, and apparently on leaving the ship they knew their fate was sealed. Eventually the ship plowed through the mess, scraping its bottom numerous times, and anchored off the south shore

promontory where Astoria is today. The ship unloaded the cargo necessary to build a fort and as soon as the foundations were laid, Thorn weighed anchor for the next part of his assignment. This foundation was the first American settlement on the Pacific Coast.

The next assignment did not go as well. On the way out of the river they recruited off a fishing canoe a native named Lamazee who had picked up some English from coastal traders, and Thorn made for Nootka Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island, a place that Lamazee warned was inhabited by hostile natives who had already massacred some traders. Thorn characteristically paid no heed, neither to the urging of one of **Astor's** officers not to let more than a few natives on board at one time, as per Astor's written orders, nor to Lamazee's warning of treachery. With a large group of Indians on the deck of the ship ready to trade, Thorn decided to play hardball with the rate of exchange. His arrogance annoyed the native chief, as it did everyone else, and a fracas ensued in which Thorn actually hit the chief and threw him off the Tonquin. This quickly led to a fight aboard the ship, as the Indians had tomahawks and clubs under their robes, and Thorn and his officers were immediately killed. A great battle raged for hours and the deck was covered with blood and bodies. Even then there was a chance for the ship to escape, as the anchor had been partially weighed and the ship was drifting off the coast. A dying officer, Mr. Lewis, beckoned natives from the surrounding canoes to come aboard, then he blew up the ship. That was the end of the Tonquin.

This left the new settlement without a supply ship.

Meanwhile, **Astor's** overland party, numbering over 60 men and one woman in three boats, was making its slow way up the Missouri River. After wintering up the river from what is now St. Joseph, Missouri, they raced up the Missouri, abandoning the river near Rapid City, to avoid the Sioux and the Blackfoot nations. They then trekked across the Great Plains on ponies and on foot. (I'm violently compressing this adventure, leaving out volumes of detail, including an encounter with Daniel Boone and a drag out race upstream with the Spanish trapper Manuel Lisa) They finally reached the Grand Tetons, from there clawing their way through the Union Pass to the Green River, then the Snake River, where their spirits lifted. The veteran canoeists would finally be heading downstream.

They traded away the ponies for pelts, and built canoes, heading joyously down the river against the strong advice of the natives that this was not a good idea. When they reached the treacherous Cauldron Linn they found out why, barely reaching the river's high banks with their lives, provisions and pelts. They buried the cargo of pelts for future expeditions to pick up, since all along they had been doing business with tribes -some of whom had never seen a white man before- and adapting to necessity, they proceeded on foot.

From this point on the trip was arduous in the extreme, picking their way on soft moccasins over uncharted terrain, with little food and worsening weather.

They were supposed to have been in Astoria by now, and the expedition lost men, to the wilderness and the wild rivers, lost their way, split into two parties, and finally hobbled separately into Astoria in the middle of January, 1811.

(These last two paragraphs describe an expedition comparable to that of Lewis and Clark in size, difficulty and historical impact, and this hardly does it justice.)

Since the loss of the Tonquin, Astoria hadn't seen a supply ship, and the settlers had exhausted their supply of trade goods to procure food from the neighboring tribes, which were growing restless. The ranking Astorian, McDougal, learned that the tribes were planning an attack on the fort, and he cleverly called the chiefs in to a powwow. There had been many deaths among the natives from smallpox brought to the area by coastal traders, and so McDougal used this fear of death against the chiefs. He showed them a stoppered bottle, explaining that this was smallpox, and that any attack on the fort would unleash it, killing everyone. The chiefs chose peaceful co-existence over grisly death.

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Meanwhile, by 1812, relations with England had deteriorated to the point that Congress declared war. **Astor** was in Washington frantically protecting his interests, sending couriers up to the Great Lakes with instructions (the British garrisons in Canada first heard that war was declared from **Astor's** agents) placing spies, petitioning President Madison, playing sides against each other, generally trying to turn every change in international relations into profit. Since it was too dangerous now to send a supply ship to Astoria from New York, he sent an agent to London with instructions to purchase a ship, fill it with supplies, and sail to Astoria under the British flag, which it did, in an armed convoy with other British ships bound for the Pacific. Also in the convoy was an expeditionary frigate with instructions to take the American (Astorian) fort at the mouth of the Columbia River, unaware that **Astor's** proxy was sailing in the same convoy. (**Astor's** 'British' ship, the Forester, never went to Astoria for fear of being smoked out by the British, instead it traded up and down the California coast and was sold in Hawaii for sandalwood.)

**John Jacob Astor** was by this time almost a government unto himself, with agents, partners, spies, ships and employees all over the world. He was competing successfully with England, the U.S. and France, even the Spanish, since he had designs on Spanish California.

The rival North West Company was finally able to fly the British flag over an outpost of the Spokane River, but when they descended the Columbia to its mouth, they were deeply disappointed to see Old Glory flying over the fort at Astoria. The Astorians, in turn, needed a greater presence in the tributaries and established an outpost on the Okanagan River 540 miles above Astoria. By then **Astor's** flagship, the Beaver, had arrived with provisions and men and sealed orders from **Astor**. Soon various Astorian parties were headed back by rivers and trails to St. Louis. In these extraordinary adventures they opened up the

Oregon Trail and made countless discoveries in the interior. They also, as all the overlanders did, experienced severe hardships and often nearly died of starvation and exposure. The trip from Astoria to St. Louis took 306 days.

But the world would soon learn of the Grand Tetons, of Yellowstone, of all the wonders of the Pacific wilderness. **Astor's** men were trapping and trading and setting up posts all over what is now Idaho, Oregon and Washington, but the North West Company, representing British empirical interests (half-heartedly, because Empire-building was the job of the British Navy, not of fur traders), was by this time making a strong showing in the area. The news of the war took a year to arrive in Astoria, and it considerably complicated everything. Complexity grew, leading to confusion, compromise, tested loyalties and cross purposes, not to mention the hunger and privation due the lack of a supply ship. The Beaver had sailed to Canton to dispose of the first Astorian furs, as well as Russian furs from New Archangel, and the nominal leader of the Astorians, Hunt, who had been on board and left the ship in Hawaii. The Beaver had been instructed to return to Astoria with supplies and trade goods, but with news of the war, stayed in Canton for fear of being captured by the British.

The remaining Astorians were without specific orders due to the new situation, and had to come up with plans that essentially turned over the fort and much of the business to the rival fur company. Astoria was doomed. McDougal was under the impression that a British frigate was arriving to take Astoria by force, and so he sold the fort to McTavish of the North West Company for \$58,000. McDougal was then made a partner in that organization. When the British frigate finally arrived, the captain scoffed at all the fuss over a grimy bunch of shacks and a mud fort, but he soon realized the significance of the outpost. Astoria represented control over a large, desirable portion of the North American continent, and it had been built and controlled by **John Jacob Astor**, not the United States, not France, not Britain, not Spain.

When **Astor** learned that the British were in Astoria, he cursed and stomped, threatened to raise an army to retake the fort, but he did not cry. He was busy sending ship after ship in and out of New York through the British blockade. It is not revealed in any of the literature I have read how he was able to do this so consistently and brazenly, though he always had diplomatic tricks up his sleeves, but it is obvious to anyone who has hauled a boat out of the water in the fall that the British frigates on blockade assignment would have foul bottoms, while **Astor's** always had clean new copper plate. **Astor** had obviously calculated the speed differential and carried on a brisk trade throughout the war, steadily smuggling furs from Montreal and sending them to China and Europe, along with every other commodity, consistently outrunning British pursuers. One ship, the Macedonian, was caught in battle with an English convoy and the President, with the famous Stephen Decatur in command, had to surrender while the Macedonian took off for China with British frigates in pursuit, arriving in Canton four days ahead of the chasers. He lost another, the Tonquin, in battle

with natives off Vancouver, and a few ships were wrecked, but otherwise almost all his ships were plying their trade over all the oceans of the world, in spite of the war and the British Navy.

Astoria reverted to the U.S. flag after the War, but Astor's dream in the area, despite initial success, had been sold out to Canadian rivals. He did not consider the project a failure, though if history had spun a slightly different course, Astor's power and wealth would have been even greater, and Astoria would now be a city the size of San Francisco or Seattle. Whether it would have become part of the United States, or Britain or Canada is not clear. The flag flying over the fort would have an A, and probably also a beaver (ironically the only beaver in the Oregon would be on Astor's flag, the rest having perished in the wildlife holocaust known as the fur business) **Astor** never forgave McDougal, who had betrayed Astoria to the North Westers, depriving **Astor** of a real empire to complement his commercial one.

In 1812 Jefferson wrote **Astor** that he "hoped for the establishment of an independent nation on the Pacific coast, bound to the United States by ties of blood, language and friendship."

From his lawn overlooking Hell's Gate, the old Astor would tell how he regretted never having become King, Jacob the first of Astoria, but his main regret was not buying the Louisiana Territories when he had the chance.

**The Family Connection:** The Chanlers are related to **Astor** through his son and commercial heir **William Backhouse Astor**, whose daughter **Emily** married **Sam Ward**. Their child, **Maddie**, married **John Winthrop Chanler** and it is their eight surviving children who were known as the 'Astor orphans'. My mother's grandfather, **Winthrop Chanler**, was the second oldest. **William Backhouse Astor's** wife was **Margaret Armstrong**, descendant of the Livingstons and daughter and grand daughter of the two General **John Armstrongs**. Her father was Secretary of War in the war of 1812.

## VOL 2 FOURTEEN

### **RENT WARS**

How Livingston Manor was finally broken up in the early to mid nineteenth century and the tenant farmers were finally able to own their farms. Today the drive along route 22 to the Massachusetts border is a swim through a bucolic cultivated landscape with no commercial development at all.

a militia, and Captain John Underhill has been engaged to see to the security of the community. The French to the North and the Dutch to the south are as much a potential threat as the native armies and the grim mortal possibilities and dangers of fending for ourselves. Our divine purpose is to convert the heathens to the light of our savior, and as baptized members of the congregations they will be equal to us.

**Roger Williams** jumped to his feet. Sir, that should not be a condition of friendship, a conversion to our faith.

The Earl of Warwick jumped to his feet: Sir, that should not be a condition of equality!

**Roger Williams**: That's not the point, your

Lordship.

The Earl: That's my point. These are heathens, Mr. Winthrop. They dress in animal skins.

**Roger Williams**: So do we. My point is that they

are human beings, in the light of Christ whether they know it or accept it or not.

Earl: That is heretical, Sir, I'm not buying into

heresies.

**Winthrop**: The question concerns the rights of

natives under the government we are proposing today.

**Dudley**: The rights of non-Christians. About the

same as our rights under our glorious intoxication of a king.

**Winthrop**, quoting from the Charter: We "Shall

have and enjoy all liberties and immunities of free and

natural subjects within all the dominions." It follows that if we are to be free, in the light of god, we perhaps should hold off

on enslaving other people.

**Williams**: People who have more right to the land

than we do.

Cotton: Perhaps we can learn the will of God, if

we quiet ourselves and listen, through devout prayer.

**Winthrop**: Thank God for godly leadership, which

will be vital to our adventure. By God's will to guide our souls

we have the Rev. John Cotton, the Rev. Davenport, the Rev.

Hooker, and if he wishes, our young friend Roger Williams.

The congregations will unite into a Sainly community on the

virgin shore. The reverend Williams has experience and

ability in both legal and clerical matters, having served as

secretary to the Honorable Edward Coke in Parliament, and