

**THE DUTCH RECORDS OF KINGSTON,
ULSER COUNTY, NEW YORK (ESOPUS,
WILDWYCK,
SWANENBURGH, KINGSTON) 1658-1684;
PART 1, MAY 31, 1658 - NOVEMBER 18,
1664; ESOPUS-WILDWYCK**

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The Dutch records of Kingston, Ulser County, New York (Esopus, Wildwyck, Swanenburgh, Kingston) 1658-1684; Part 1, May 31, 1658 - November 18, 1664; Esopus-Wildwyck by Samuel Oppenheim

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THE DUTCH
RECORDS OF KINGSTON

ULSTER COUNTY, NEW YORK

(ESOPUS, WILDWYCK, SWANENBURGH, KINGSTON)

10865

1658-1684

x

WITH SOME LATER DATES

PART I

MAY 31, 1658—NOVEMBER 18, 1664

ESOPUS—WILDWYCK

REVISED TRANSLATION FOR

NEW YORK STATE HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

BY



SAMUEL OPPENHEIM

Of the New York Bar

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Author of "The Early Congressional Debates and Reports," "The Early History of the
Jews in New York, 1654-1664," "An Early Jewish Colony in
Western Guiana, 1658-1666," Etc.

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EX-1

INTRODUCTION

The old Dutch records of Kingston, now in the office of the County Clerk of Ulster County, dating from 1658, are second in importance in the history of the Colony of New York to the data contained in the *Records of New Amsterdam*, and vie with, if they do not exceed, in importance the *Records of the County of Albany and Colony of Rensselaerswyck*, edited by Prof. Jonathan Pearson, and the Dutch court records of Albany still unpublished.

The Kingston records have within the past fifteen years become accessible to the public in translated form, in three large manuscript volumes kept in the office of the County Clerk of Ulster County. They have not heretofore been printed.

The New York State Historical Association has decided, if it shall meet with sufficient encouragement, to print the whole of these records in a good English rendering, after a careful revision by comparison with the original Dutch.

The manuscript translation referred to, under the supervision of Judge A. T. Clearwater, as commissioner appointed by the Board of Supervisors of Kingston, was made between 1895 and 1898 by Mr. Dingman Versteeg, a native of Holland. His work, however, though possessing merits and of value in a comparison, is deemed by competent judges who have examined it to be unsuited to publication without thorough revision. Such a revision has become a desideratum. The task of making it has been entrusted by the New York State Historical Association to Mr. Samuel Oppenheim, of the New York bar, who, in another field dealing with the Dutch period in New Amsterdam between 1654 and 1664, has familiarized himself with the crabbed Dutch writing and the language of similar records, and whose acquaintance with legal forms and expressions has been of great service in correcting the old translation, re-

lating as it does to court records. Many changes, both in style and in matter, have been found necessary in the revision, the corrected manuscript showing alterations and recasting on almost every page.

While a fluent and readable version is given in the revision, the aim, which is believed to have been accomplished, has been to adhere closely to the original Dutch record and to bring out its meaning clearly.

The court records begin, at page 11, of Book I, with the minutes of the first meeting of the Inferior Court of Justice at Wildwyck, as the Esopus, later Kingston, was then called, presided over by the Schout, or sheriff, and three Commissaries, or commissioners, appointed by Director General Stuyvesant and the Council of New Netherland. The first meeting was held July 12, 1661. Preceding the first court entry is a copy of a document dated May 31, 1658, relating to the defence of the village against attacks by the Indians. This appears at page 3. The preceding two pages are missing, but, judging from a statement in *The History of Ulster County*, by Nathaniel B. Sylvester, Phila., 1880, pp. 44 and 46, in a chapter copied from an unpublished manuscript of Jonathan W. Hasbrouck, of Ulster County, they probably contained a copy of the order of Stuyvesant giving the name Wildwyck to the place, and a memorandum of the fact that the court had been established there in May, 1661, and that Roelooft Swartwout had been appointed Schout, together with a copy of the order of his appointment. Pages 4 to 10 are blank. They are referred to further on.

The extant Dutch records give the legal history of Ulster county quite fully to 1684. They also include a variety of account books from 1676 to 1719, and from 1772 to 1774, as well as some church ordinances of 1742. A brief description of them, as found in the report of Prof. Herbert L. Osgood on the Archives of New York, printed in the *Report of the American Historical Association* for 1900, Vol. II, pp. 78-79, will afford a general idea of their contents and of their historical importance. They consist of:

1. Court records, Book 1, July 21, 1661 to May 6, 1664. 336 pp. Folio. Prefaced by a copy of a bond by the inhabitants of Esopus, dated May 31, 1658, to demolish their separated dwellings, build closer together, and surround the village with a stockade.

2. Court records, Book II, June 29, 1664 to November 5-15, 1667. 360 pp. Folio.

3. Court records, Book III, November 12-22, 1667 to August 26, 1673. 302 pp. Folio. At the end is an indenture of service, acknowledged before the secretary, 1672-3, and in English, a summons to appear before the next court of sessions.

4. Court records, Book IV, November 9, 1673 to November 11, 1675. 100 pp. Folio. Also marked "Liber C."

5. Court records, Book V, December 22, 1676 to October 15, 1684. 243 pp. Folio. This volume also contains an instrument of December 19, 1685, acknowledged before Thomas Garton, justice of the peace. In this volume a list is given of the "Protocol" or court records, 22 in number, stating which pages were missing on February 19, 1700-01.

6. Court records, January 8, 1680-1 to March 13, 1683-4, and March 15, 1680-1 to September 5, 1683. 354 pp. Folio.

7. Secretary's papers, Liber A, April 7, 1664 to December 31 1665. 140 pp. Folio. Contains depositions, deeds, mortgages, etc.

8. Secretary's papers, Liber B., 1666-1681. 442 pp. Folio. Contains

(a) Register of the secretary, January 5, 1666 to July 23, 1667, 190 pp.

(b) Contract of sale of horses, Gouwert Poulussen to Cornelis Barentsen Slecht, 1670; and two memoranda of fees due March 16, 1670, and November 9, 1673, pp. 191-192. Pp. 193-220 are blank.

(c) Register of the secretary, January 11 to November 22, 1675, pp. 221-235. Pp. 236 to 254 are blank.

(d) Register of the secretary, March 10, 1675 to November 9, 1676, pp. 255-276. Pp. 277-292 are blank.

(e) Register of the secretary, January 5, 1678-9 to February 29, 1680, pp. 293-295. Pp. 296 is blank.

(f) Transport for three negro slaves, John Colloway to Gabriel Minviele, 1680 (in English), p. 297. Pp. 298 to 316 are blank.

(g) Register of the secretary, March 3, 1679 to February 27, 1679-80, pp. 317-381. P. 382 is blank.

(h) Indenture, December 23, 1678 (In English), p. 383. Pp. 384-400 are blank.

(i) Register of the secretary, March 3, 1679-80 to January 7, 1680-81. Pp. 401-442.

9. Secretary's papers, Liber C, 1669-1672. Pp. 13 to 166. Folio. Pp. 1 to 12 are blank. Contain the register of secretary La Montagne, December 27, 1669 to October 7, 1672.

10. Secretary's papers, Liber D, November 4, 1672, to April 20, 1673. Contains deeds, etc.

11. Secretary's papers, Liber E, 1676 to 1679. 216 pp. Folio. Contains register of secretary La Montagne, March 29, 1676, to March 5, 1678-9, pp. 3 to 133; and minutes of the court of sessions, April 26, 1676 to December 14, 1680, on reverse side, pp. 134 to 216.

12 to 19. Various account books relating to the poor funds, the deacons and the church, all in Dutch, covering various dates between 1676 and 1719, and also the years 1742, 1772 to 1774, 162 pp. Folio.

A romantic interest attaches to these volumes. Many years before 1895 they disappeared from the Ulster County Clerk's office at Kingston, under circumstances not now definitely known. One day in June, 1895, an express package was received by the Clerk, which upon being opened was found to contain the records just described, together with some others in English. Inquiry then made resulted in the information that they had been shipped from Quogue, Long Island, by a gentleman who was a stranger to the express company. About fifteen years before this, rumors had been circulated in Ulster County that the records could be found on Long Island, but a sheriff, armed with a search warrant, whose arrival in New York was heralded with an announcement of the purpose of his visit, found nothing.

In explanation of their disappearance and return, Wheeler B. Melius, in an introduction to the index to the Kingston records, printed in the *Index to the Public Records of the County of Albany, State of New York, 1630-1894*, quotes a statement concerning them, made by a gentleman named Van Alstyne, residing in Brooklyn, to Thomas J. Van Alstyne, former Mayor of Albany and ex-congressman, while in search of genealogical information. As quoted, Mr. Van Alstyne of Brooklyn said:

"Years ago I, with a few others, became interested in these old Dutch records at Kingston. There was very little interest displayed in their preservation, and, being written more or less illegibly in the old Dutch of that early period, they were as a sealed book to most people. No translation had ever been attempted, officially or otherwise, and as there seemed to be no prospects of a translation, the records were removed to Brooklyn, where arrangements had been made for a complete translation by an old Dutch scholar. The

work was scarcely started when the translator was taken ill and died. Owing to the press of other business, I lost track of the records, but it seems that when the effects of the deceased translator were disposed of, his executors, knowing nothing of the ownership of the records, but being satisfied that they were of a public character, had them packed in a box and removed to the old city hall, where they were left undisturbed for a long time. I was one of the commissioners having in charge the building of the new city hall, and when that edifice was completed and the work of transferring the books and papers was under way, this old box of Kingston records came to light. While the officials, to whom the records were Greek, were discussing the advisability of consigning the box of 'rubbish' to the junk pile, I happened to come into the room, and at once recognized the records. I had them carefully boxed and shipped to the Ulster County Clerk's office at Kingston. No word was sent with them, because those who had brought them to Brooklyn were unable to complete the work and thought they might be open to censure for removing them from Kingston and then allowing them to remain so long neglected and in danger of destruction. These are the facts of the disappearance and return of the Kingston records, and the mystery is a mystery no longer."

The Dutch traded at Kingston Point as early as 1613, and left some boats there in 1621-22. No permanent occupation seems to have been made, so far as appears from any manuscript records, prior to 1652. In that year Thomas Chambers, an Englishman by birth, with a colony of settlers from the Manor of Rensselaerswyck, began a permanent occupation of the region of the Esopus, presumably by consent of the aborigines or by purchase of farms from them.¹

Rev. Johannes Megapolensis and Rev. Samuel Drisius, in August, 1657, writing to the Classis of Amsterdam, refer to Esopus as follows:

"About eighteen [Dutch] miles [about 54 English] up the North River, half way between the Manhattans and Rensselaer or Beaverwyck, lies a place called by the Dutch Esopus or Sypous and by the Indians Atharhacton [Atkarkacton]. It is an exceedingly fine country there. Thereupon some Dutch families settled there, who are doing well."²

¹ *The History of Ulster County*, edited by Alphonso T. Clearwater, Kingston, N. Y., 1907, p. 33-34.

² *Ecclesiastical Records of New York*, vol. 1, p. 398.

Although the Dutch authorities had forbidden the sale of brandy and other liquors to the Indians, Chambers reported to Director General Stuyvesant in May, 1658, that some trouble had occurred at the Strand "through the fearful intoxication of the barbarians." They had obtained an anker of brandy (about ten gallons), and, becoming intoxicated, killed one of the inhabitants and set fire to the house of another, so that the people were compelled to fly. At a previous date the Indians, under the influence of liquor, had become quarrelsome and had compelled the settlers, under the threat of arson, to plow their lands for them, killed some hogs and a horse or two that had strayed on their plantations, and, in the estimation of their white neighbors, used great violence every day.³

On an appeal to Stuyvesant for assistance, he went up from Manhattan to the scene of the disturbance. In an interview with the inhabitants he pointed out to them the inadvisability of then thinking of war against the Indians, and suggested that they should build closer together and enclose the whole place with palisades. He marked out for them a site for a village on the north side of the Great Plat, to which he later gave the name Wildwyck, now the oldest part of Kingston.⁴

The agreement of the inhabitants by which they bound themselves to live close together, upon the assurance of protection from Stuyvesant in case of attack by the Indians, is the first entry in the extant Dutch records now put into print. A photogravure of the record of this agreement accompanies this translation.

The Indians were not pleased with the action of the white men, and complained to Stuyvesant that the land taken for the village had not been paid for, but after a conference with him they agreed to yield their claim "to grease his feet with, because he had made such a long journey to come and see them." Later, further meetings were held with the Indians, and further land obtained from them. Matters proceeded along with more or less friction until the latter part of 1659, when, through the sale of intoxicants

³ Clearwater, *supra*, p. 34.

⁴ *Id.*, pp. 34-35.