

**PAPERS OF THE AMERICAN
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II, NO. 3. WILLEM USSELINX:
FOUNDER OF THE DUTCH AND
SWEDISH WEST INDIA COMPANIES**

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W. James

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WILLEM USSELINX
FOUNDER OF THE DUTCH AND SWEDISH WEST INDIA COMPANIES

BY
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PREFACE.

The sources of this biography of one who may be called the Lesseps of the seventeenth century, have been of three kinds: first, the books and pamphlets of Usselinx; second, his manuscripts, and manuscript materials concerning him; third, various books, contemporary or recent. Of most of the printed writings of Usselinx there are copies in some one or other of our libraries; of others I have obtained transcripts from abroad. Of them all, the *Argonautica Gustaviana* is the most comprehensive, and the most fruitful of materials to a biographer. As there are in America several copies of it, but very few copies of those pamphlets which are reprinted in it, I have, in citing them, made my references to the pages of the *Argonautica*. The first part of the appendix gives a full bibliography of all printed pieces which I attribute to Usselinx, with the titles lined and typographically imitated. Their rarity and the need of distinguishing editions seemed to justify this care; it has been possible to improve greatly upon the list given by Asher. In our own time some of the letters and memorials of Usselinx have been printed by the late Professor O. van Rees, in the appendices to the second volume of his *Geschiedenis der Staathuishoudkunde in Nederland tot het Einde der achttiende Eeuw*; another has been printed in the *Kronijk of the Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht*.

The late Hon. Henry C. Murphy, while minister of the United States at the Hague during Mr. Buchanan's administration, had copies made of some of the memorials and letters of Usselinx in the Royal Archives, as well as of most of the resolutions of the States General and a few of those of the States of Holland concerning him. It was the intention of

Mr. Murphy to prepare a biographical sketch of him, but this was never done. These copies, together with a few letters and notes on the subject, were acquired for the Library of the State of New York, and were examined by me at Albany. Considerable as this mass of material is, the archives at the Hague contain much more. The royal archivist, Mr. L. Ph. C. van den Bergh, was so good as to send me a complete list of all resolutions referring to Usselinx and all letters and memorials of his to be found there; I then procured copies of all those which were not included among Mr. Murphy's transcripts. Very few of the resolutions of the States of Holland, however, were included in either of these collections. Those resolutions, though printed, were printed in 277 volumes folio, and were not more accessible to me than manuscript. Through the kindness of Dr. W. N. du Rieu, librarian of the University of Leiden, I obtained a complete set of copies of all the resolutions of Holland respecting Usselinx or the Dutch West India Company down to the closing years of his life.

But much the largest mass of manuscript material, and that which has given the greatest amount of absolutely new information, has come to me from the archives of the kingdom of Sweden, at Stockholm. It was the habit of Chancellor Oxenstjerna to preserve his papers with great care. The Oxenstjerna collection in the archives mentioned contains therefore a great number of the letters and memorials of Usselinx addressed to him. Of these, and of whatever else the Swedish archives have that bears upon my subject, I have procured copies. Of one of his memorials a copy has come to me from the Archives des Affaires Étrangères at Paris. From local archives in various towns in the north of Europe, transcripts of documents or extracts from records relating to him have been obtained. As at the beginning of his letters or memorials to the States General or the Swedish chancellor he frequently mentions when he last wrote, I am able to have the gratifying assurance that, despite the distance in time, I have a copy of nearly every letter which he wrote to them, beside many to others,