

PASTOR ISAAK RIJSDIJK 1731 - 1790

ISAAC RIJSDIJK or RYSDYK 1731-1790

REFERENCE POINTS

BIRTH 25 December 1731 Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands

MATRICULATION

14 September 1751 Groningen University, Groningen.

INSTALLED 'PREDIKANT'

12 August 1759 at Echteld, Gelderland, Netherlands

MARRIAGE TO HENRICA VERWEIJ

27 January 1765 at Echteld, Gelderland, Netherlands

ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK

June to August 1765

OATH OF DENIZATION

3 July 1766 New York, USA

FIRST SERMON AT NEW HACKENSACK

15 September 1765

FIRST BAPTISMS AT POUGHKEEPSIE

22 September 1765

CLASSICAL SCHOOL FOUNDED AT FISHKILL

1772

PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE DUTCH REFORM CHURCH

1772 and 1781

DEATH AT NEW HACKENSACK

2 November 1790, buried 4 November

BACKGROUND

Dutch Reform Church in New York State – The Classis of Amsterdam – Conferentie and Coetus Parties – Churches in Dutchess County, New York State – The Call from the Congregations in Dutchess County

The first Dutch Reform Church in New Amsterdam was organised in 1628 by Reverend Jonas Michaelis in response to the needs of the several hundred settlers of New Nederland, whose previous needs had been presided over by a number of 'Comforters of the Sick' or lay persons showing a knowledge of the Bible but without formal theological training who led worship and read sermons to the congregations. The Colony of New Amsterdam came under the jurisdiction of the Classis of

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Amsterdam. Each church had a consistory, which was the governing body of that church, composed of elders, deacons and the pastor. The elders were responsible for the ecclesiastical discipline of the congregation, while the deacons looked after the temporal needs of the church. A Classis consisted of the minister and an elder from each consistory located in close proximity to one another within a defined area. It usually met quarterly and exercised general supervision of the churches within its territory, including the licensing and ordination of new ministers. The provincial synods were made up of two ministers and two elders from each classis in a specific geographical area. Meeting annually they had general supervision over the proceedings and decisions of the classes. The national synod was composed of selected members of the provincial synods, and met rarely, usually in times of crisis. It was the highest judicatory body of the church. Until the latter part of the eighteenth century only the consistorial level of government existed within the Reformed Church in New Netherlands. At this time, something approaching synods and classes was introduced. Until this happened, all decisions and religious questions of any significance had to be referred to ecclesiastical bodies in the Netherlands, especially the Classis of Amsterdam.

When Holland was developing its far-flung commercial empire and Dutch Reformed churches were being established overseas, no single ecclesiastical body had jurisdiction over the colonial churches. It was the Consistory of Amsterdam which sent over to New Amsterdam the first two comforters of the sick, and the Classis of Enkhuizen which sent over the first ordained minister. Gradually, however, as Amsterdam became the commercial centre of Holland's overseas trade, the direction of ecclesiastical affairs outside the Netherlands devolved on the Classis of Amsterdam, so much so that the Classis, in 1636, created a special committee to speed up the handling of overseas affairs.

Relations between the Governors of the colony of New York, since 1664 a British possession, and the Dutch Reform Church were not easy, and conflicts over appointments and relationships between the various denominations present in the colony were frequent. These strained relations continued into the early years of the eighteenth century.

Meanwhile the population expansion continued into the valleys of the Hudson and Delaware Rivers. New churches were formed and their pastors travelled far and wide visiting surrounding communities to preach the gospel, administer sacraments and perform marriages. When the numbers of people at these preaching stations grew large enough, steps were taken to organise them into congregations in their own right. Later, sometimes after as many as fifty or sixty years, a church was built, and the community wanted their own pastor.

As the number of settlers multiplied and spread out from New Amsterdam, it became more difficult to obtain Pastors for the new congregations. An additional difficulty was that all pastors were to be licensed and supplied from Holland, at the expense of the congregations. Volunteers from the Netherlands were not enough to keep up with the expansion of the colony and so a movement, to be called the "Coetus" formed to try and address this problem, with other matters of local jurisdiction, by educating and licensing Pastors from among the colonists.

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themselves.

The Classis of Amsterdam resisted this proposal to wrest jurisdiction away from it, but the sheer difficulty experienced by congregations in New York, kept the debate alive.

The expense of bringing a pastor from Holland could be considerable, particularly if he came direct from Europe. Most calls sent to Europe did not specify a particular minister, but were sent to the Classis of Amsterdam. (This was the method used in Isaac's case.) Some were sent to individual ministers who were acquaintances of pastors already serving in the Colony. For instance, the expenses incurred in bringing Isaac's predecessor, first pastor of Poughkeepsie and Fishkill, Dominie Cornelius Van Schie, in 1731, amounted to seventy six pounds, which was slightly more than his annual salary. The amount of time could run into ten or twelve weeks at sea including layovers, and incurred extra expenses. In addition, a pastor's salary commenced from the date of leaving his previous pastorate, which in Isaac's case was at the end of April. This expense frequently caused two or more churches to send a call together for a shared pastor to help defray the costs.

Many Pastors had their salary paid partially in kind, with the congregation supplying such necessities as food and firewood. Another means of remuneration was the pastor himself who, on occasion, was given a plot of land and expected to support himself with crops and cattle and poultry of his own.

The alternative, which was to send a prospective minister to Holland to be licensed, was also a protracted and expensive procedure. During the course of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Classis of Amsterdam had condoned the examination of Peter Tesschenmaeker as a candidate for ordination (1679) and had praised the ministers who had carried out the examinations for their action. Fifty years later in 1729, permission was granted for the examination of another minister, although the Classis emphasised that this was not to be seen as setting a precedent, although it did in fact permit more ordinations.

In 1735 Classis invited the clergy of New York to send them a Plan for unifying the Dutch Churches in New York in a Synod, but without impairing relations with itself. This was the catalyst for the formation of the Coetus. The expression 'Coetus' (pronounced 'seedus',) was used to designate a convention or assembly of churches that lacked full classical authority. The Coetus was formed and met for the first time in New York in September 1737 although it did not receive final approval from Classis until 1739. Thereafter it met erratically, always preserving its subordination to the Classis of Amsterdam. Increasingly it determined its own affairs, but with the provision of a system of appeal against decisions to the Classis. It still did not have the right to ordain ministers which should have been one of its primary functions, and because of its apparent ineffectiveness, numbers attending the annual meetings fell. In 1747, attempts were made to revitalise the Coetus and meetings were more frequent thereafter.

There had always been opposition to the Coetus desire to organise their own affairs and form a Classis in New York. This opposition formalised itself in the formation of

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the Conferentie or Conference which met first in 1754, and thereafter met to discuss similar problems to the Coetus, but with the emphasis on retaining its subordinate position in relation to the Classis of Amsterdam. Isaac was a member of the Conferentie.

In 1771, a meeting was organised to try to bring the opposing factions together under the presidency of John H Livingston. In a spirit of compromise the Articles of Union were drawn up which gave virtual self determination to the Church in New York, with the ability to train and ordain its own ministers, and run its own affairs. It would maintain links with the Classis of Amsterdam by registering prospective ministers with them and submitting reports on a regular basis. Isaac and Rev Schoonmaker both attended and signed the articles. Isaac Rysdyk was president of the General Assembly thus formed in 1772 and 1781.

The history of the Dutch Reformed Church in Dutchess County began in 1715 when the Reformed Churches of Poughkeepsie and Fishkill were organised by the Rev. Petrus Vos of Kingston, pastor of one of the pioneer churches of America. For many years, the churches of Poughkeepsie and Fishkill remained under the jurisdiction of one Consistory.

In 1757 the church at Hopewell was organised. One year later, 1758, the New Hackensack congregation elected to form a church. In October 1764 the four churches, Poughkeepsie, Fishkill, Hopewell and New Hackensack, sent a call to the Classis of Amsterdam for a pastor to serve the four churches:

CLASSIS OF AMSTERDAM

Acts of the Deputies. April 4 1765. Call of Rev. Isaac Rysdyk. Vol 24 pages 104-6

"In the Name of the Most High Triune, Holy and Adorable God, Amen.

"In as much as the pure preaching of God's Holy Word in conjunction with the saving work of the Spirit of the Lord is the true means ordained of God to lead sinners from their misery to eternal salvation, and whereas we have now for a long time been deprived of the stated ministry of the Word, yet realising its necessity, we have taken it to heart to put forth means to secure the same:

"Therefore, we the undersigned, elders and deacons of the four combined congregations of Fishkill, Poughkeepsie, Hackensack and Hopewell, in Dutchess County in the Province of New York, met in fear of the Lord; and after calling on his holy name, took into earnest consideration the matter of a call. We unanimously resolved to send over and charge the High Rev. Classis of Amsterdam with the business of this call; that they should send us a lawful Pastor and Teacher, to exercise faithfully among us the sacred ministry of the Gospel, according to the requirements of God's Holy Word, and the doctrine and Church Order accepted by the Netherland Reformed Church, according to the Synod of Dordrecht held Anno Domini 1618-1619: - Even as we do also actually, by these presents, call that same minister which the High Rev. Classis of Amsterdam shall send to us, and who shall with his own hand sign this call in the presence of the High Rev. Classis or of its Deputies ad Res Exteras, on the following terms:

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1. In general, he shall perform all the duties of the Gospel ministry, diligently, faithfully, and with edification. These consist in the public calling upon God's name, and the pure preaching of God's Word, plainly expounding the same, and powerfully applying it; in administering the Holy Sacraments of the New Covenant, according to Christ's institution; in exercising church discipline, thus using the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven diligently and wisely, in conjunction with the Rev. Consistory; in visiting the sick; and further in doing everything that belongs to the office and the duty of a faithful overseer, pastor and teacher of Jesus Christ, and His Church.
2. In particular: He shall serve these churches in such a way, that during the six summer months of the year he shall preach twice on each Lord's Day, - in the forenoon on a freely chosen text from God's Holy Word; and in the afternoon he shall follow the lead of the Heidelberg Catechism; but during the six winter months but once (on each the Lord's Day.); but also on the Feast Days of Christmas, New Years Day, Easter (Paasch), Whitsunday (Pinxter), and Ascension Day, as is customary in the Reformed Churches. He shall also hold catechizations, as often as he and the officers shall deem useful and edifying. As regards the preaching turns: these shall occur in rotation from one church to the other, so that all the four churches shall enjoy the exact fourth part of the services, excepting that Hopewell, falling short in salary, the same shall be made up by Poughkeepsie; for which Poughkeepsie, in proportion to that extra money, shall enjoy more services than Hopewell.
3. He shall administer the Holy Supper of the Lord twice a year at Poughkeepsie, and once a year in each of the three other churches; and so much oftener as he and the Consistory shall deem to be edifying.
4. He shall perform house-visitation once a year in all the four congregations, at such time as it shall seem proper to him and the consistory.
5. The Reader (Voorleser,) in each church shall keep a record of the children who are presented for baptism.

Hereunto, and for the accomplishment of the same, do we, the undersigned members of the consistory, both elders and deacons, promise for ourselves, and our (successors) after us, to perform and contribute on our part, for him, so long as he shall be our pastor and teacher, as follows:

1. That we by virtue of this call, obligate ourselves to pay to him the sum of 130 pounds, current money of this province, yearly and every year, to be paid and satisfied from the four churches, and in such a manner, that Poughkeepsie shall contribute the proportion of 41 pounds, without any burden from either of the other churches; in the same way shall Fishkill and New Hackensack, each pay, yearly and every year, 32 pounds 10 shillings; and Hopewell, 24 pounds; each church to be responsible for its respective sum and for this only. This, the preacher shall have the right to demand during the said period (of his pastorate.) The full salary shall begin from the day when he shall preach his installation sermon in one of our churches.
2. He shall be provided with such a proper dwelling house and with so much land for garden and orchard, in one of the congregations in which he may chose to reside, as is, at present, the minister's house, and the amount of land with it, at Poughkeepsie.

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3. The congregations in which he does not reside shall provide him, when he comes to perform services among them, with proper lodgement and necessary shelter, free of charge, so long as his services among them shall require.
4. He shall, upon the acceptance and signing of this call in the manner above mentioned, receive 63 pounds to meet the expenses necessary for the voyage; and should the expenses exceed this sum, the remainder shall be paid to him on his arrival among us.
5. He shall be obliged when he accepts this call, to subordinate himself to the High Rev. Classis of Amsterdam, and also to become a member of our subordinate assembly in America, and remain perpetually a member thereof; or, if he withdraw himself from the subordination to the Classis of Amsterdam, or from our subordinated Assembly, this call shall be null and void. (This Assembly in this place is the Conferentie.)

In which form, and on these reciprocal conditions, we entrust and deliver this call to that Rev. Gentleman to whom the High Rev. Classis of Amsterdam shall present it; and who, in the presence of the High Rev. Classis, shall accept and sign it; with the hope and expectation that, under the blessing of the Lord, and the wise direction of the High Rev. Classis, a minister shall soon come over to us, in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel. This is our wish, and our prayer to God, the Almighty and the Wise Governor of all things.

That this is our sincere and hearty intention, we attest, by these our subscriptions, this third day of October, 1764. Actum at Poughkeepsie, on this date.
NB. The distance of the two farthest churches is 13 3/4 English miles."

Was signed in my presence as Moderator.

J Freyenmoet, V.D.M.
Aetas 43.

The call was signed by the twelve elders and twelve deacons of the four churches and subscribed by Isaac thus:

"The above call did I, the undersigned, after having well understood the sense and purpose thereof accept, in the fear of God, and in the presence of High Rev. Classis of Amsterdam.

Isaac Rysdyk"

This call is approved by the Classis of Amsterdam, May 6, 1765. Quod testatus, Jacobus Tyken, V.D.M. Amsterdam, and h.t. Clerk.

ACTS OF THE CLASSIS OF AMSTERDAM (Isaac Rysdyk)

1765, May 6th Art. 5. Rev Isaac Rysdyk, upon a written request from New York, and in pursuance of a letter of all serving for that purpose, has been called thither as a minister, by the Messrs. Deputies ad res Exteras. The assembly approves of this

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call and he did accept it in the fear of the Lord, and signed his name to this effect. Having been also lawfully dismissed from his church at Egteld, and from the Rev. Classis of Thiel, he requests to be installed in the Sacred Office, as minister of Poughkeepsie, Fishkill, Hackensack, and Hopewell. His request was granted him, and this was done with the prayer for the divine blessing upon him. He signed the Formulae of Concord, promised to correspond with this body, and to conduct himself in subordination thereto. The copy of the call, and the subscription, as well as the recommendation from New York, shall be recorded by the Messrs Depp. Ad res Exteras. xiv.32 [36]

With no church building available at this time, the first services at New Hackensack were held in private homes. On November 18 1765, Joris Brinkerhoff and his wife, Ida Montfort, presented the congregation with land for a church and a burial ground. During 1766, the second year of the Rev Rysdyk's ministry, the first church edifice was erected. It stood in the present Cemetery, not far from the gate where a stone marks the spot. In one of the earliest records of the church, written in Dutch and dated October 31 1765, we read:

"The church shall be built here in New Hackensack in the place where the schoolhouse now stands, near the house of Joris Brinkerhoff. Hereto help us the Almighty to whose honour this house shall be builded that it may be said THE LORD IS HERE." [1]

EARLY YEARS

Origin of the Name 'Rijdsdijk' - Birth, Parents and Rijdsdijk, Van Delden Ancestry – Jacobus Rijdsdijk and the Mennonite Church - Groningen University – Matriculation and Classical Studies – Examination for Licence to Preach – Marriage and Children – The Call to America

The name 'Rijdsdijk' derives from a dyke called the 'Rijdsdijk' [reed dyke, a reference to its manner of construction,] situated near the village of Rhoon south of Rotterdam. Most of the people in the area, who lived along the dyke, were farmers, and in time, the location of the Rijdsdijk gave them their family name. Originally, not all of them were related to each other, but according to church records, the name became widely used from the early part of the 17th century onwards, first in Rhoon, and soon after 1700 in Ridderkerk and the surrounding area. How Jacobus came to be born in Norden is not known, but it is possible that his father Pieter was also a Mennonite pastor and was sent to Norden to look after the congregation there. There is a record of the attestation of a Pieter Rijdsdijk, 'doopsgezinde', from Schiedam, at Lieden in 1738, who probably died in 1739. Perhaps this was Jacobus's father returning to his childhood home in his old age.

Isaac Rijdsdijk was born on 25 December 1731, in Groningen, Netherlands. His parents were Jacobus Rijdsdijk and Hendrikje van Delden. Jacobus was born in Norden, in Ostfriesland, just across the border, in Germany, circa 1692, and was the 'Jacobus Petri Rijdsdijk, Frisiae Orientalis' who matriculated at Groningen 3 October 1710. Jakobus Peters Rysdyk was baptised in the Mennonite Church at Norden, as a 20 year old, on 21 August 1712. [30]

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Hendrikje was the daughter of Isaac Berends Van Delden and Hendrikje Gerrits Hulshoff, and was born in Deventer, Overijssel, Netherlands in 1696. They were married in Groningen on 26 April 1718, and in addition to Isaac, had at least two more children, Sara born in 1722, and Henrica Elizabeth, born in Groningen on 25 October 1737. Hendrikje's family can be traced back to a place in Germany called Berg Steinfurt (Burgsteinfurt), between Munster and Enschede in Holland, in the mid sixteenth century.

Isaac's father was a Mennonite, a member of a Protestant church rising out of the Anabaptists, a radical reform movement of the 16th Century reformation, and named for Menno Simonz, a Dutch priest who consolidated and institutionalised the work initiated by the moderate Anabaptist leaders.

Mennonites are Trinitarian (believing in the doctrine of the Trinity, i.e. Father, Son and Holy Spirit,) affirm the scriptures, especially the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus as their final authority for faith and life, and appeal to the pattern of the early church as their congregational model. They stress the importance of Baptism on confession of faith and a symbolic understanding of the Lord's Supper. [As a part of this faith they practice adult baptism, and Isaac, having been brought up as a Mennonite would have been baptised during, or shortly before he began his studies at Groningen.] The doctrines of nonconformity to the world, nonswearing of oaths, nonresistance in lieu of military service, and church discipline are the tenets of the faith. Services are sermon centred, and a simple almost austere liturgy surrounds the Gospel proclamation. [22]

Isaac is recorded in 1750, while still at the University of Groningen, as having entered a dispute with one Reinier Klopper who was at the time, a teacher in the church, accusing him of deviating from the confession, according to Socian philosophy. Socianism was a movement, named after Fausto Sozzini [1539-1604] (in Latin Faustus Socinus,) which had its origins in a secret society in Vicenza in Italy in the 16th century, and which totally abjured the basic tenets of both the Mennonite and Reformed Churches amongst others. They were "Antitrinitarian", which was diametrically opposed to Isaac's belief, believing that there was no Trinity, that Christ was not consubstantial with the Holy Spirit, that he was not conceived of the Holy Spirit, but of St Joseph, that his death and passion were not endured for the redemption of humanity, and that he was not born of the Virgin Mary and that she did not retain her virginity. The society was broken up in Vicenza, moved first to Cracow in Poland, and then spread throughout Europe and England in the 17th century. [33]

The Van Delden family were Mennonites and merchants in the Deventer region. Sara, Isaac's sister married a Jacobus Takens, and their eldest son Jacobus Rijdsdijk Takens born 3 May 1852 in Bergschenhoek, near Rotterdam, Zuid Holland also became a 'predikant' in the Reformed Church, dying in Amsterdam on 14 December 1804.

Jacobus Rijdsdijk wrote three books on the Mennonite faith, which were published in Groningen between 1729 and 1735. These books were the direct result of a schism

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within the Mennonite congregation, which developed over a major difference in doctrine. [25]

The first pastor in Groningen at the time was a Rev. Eppo Botterman. One of the tenets of the Mennonite belief was that before being able to participate in the Communion, a member of the church would receive instruction in the faith, and when he was fully instructed, make a public confession of his faith before the congregation. At this time, he would be permitted to receive the sacrament. The followers of Botterman took the view that this was not necessary, and that any member of the church should be able to take communion whether he had confessed or not. Botterman wrote a pamphlet "The True Depiction of a Collegiant" which set out his views. Jacobus wrote his book 'A Short Outline of the Doctrine of Truth..(1733) in defence of the Orthodox view.

The schism developed into a major debate with Jacobus and his followers holding their services in a different building, until finally, Botterman and his followers asked the congregation to vote for whichever doctrine they favoured. Botterman won the vote, and despite the fact that for some time the Burgemeesteren and Raad, (Mayor and Council) of Groningen defended Jacobus by rejecting several formal requests from Botterman's followers for his removal, he was eventually obliged to leave the city and return to his congregation in Almelo where the brethren "were truly dearly beloved ones". Between 1716 and 1723 he was predikant in Almelo, from 1723 to 1728 in Zwolle, from 1728 to 1742 in Groningen, and in 1742 he returned to his congregation in Almelo, where he died in 1744.

Henrica lived to a ripe old age, and having apparently moved, with Isaac and daughter Henrica, to Echteld, she died in Tiel, Overijssel in 1773 aged 77.

Considering that Isaac was brought up in an orthodox Mennonite household, and was likely to have been schooled in the strict traditions of the Mennonite church, he must have made a conscious decision to become a Reformed Church pastor. The schism within the Mennonite Church in Groningen, and the debate about the basic tenets of the faith must have been talked about daily within the household, and Isaac's immediate acquaintance. At a time when the followers of Botterman were questioning the commitment of the Orthodox Mennonite to the basic tenets of his belief, the strict catechitical instruction and the confession of faith, the Reformed Church must have become the natural alternative for the orthodox Mennonite who did not want to follow the less strict path advocated by Botterman. Orthodox Reformed and Orthodox Mennonites had a few principles in common; their dislike of the Common Grace of Tolerance, their adherence to the Twelve Apostolic Articles, and their devotion to the dogma of the Undivided Trinity.

Whether Isaac was baptised by his father into the Mennonite church before his death in 1744, or baptised into the Reformed Church whilst at University in the late 1740s has yet to be determined, but his move merely reflected the trend within the Mennonite tradition at the time, which saw many of the faith turning to the Reformed Church as the orthodox alternative to the direction the followers of Botterman were taking.

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Nothing is known about Isaac's youth, but he must have been exposed, from an early age, to profound religious debate, and a strict religious upbringing. Also, having been born on Christmas Day, he may have been destined for the Church from the beginning. This early exposure to religious debate, and schism within the congregations, would also have profoundly influenced his later life, when he took a leading part in the reuniting of the Coetus and Conferentie Parties in the Reformed Church in New York in 1771/2.

He was trained for the priesthood at Groningen University. Most of the ministers who came to America directly from Europe received their training in the Netherlands, usually at the Universities of Lieden or Groningen. To enter one of these schools, a student had to have the necessary preparation. This usually began by attending a vernacular school until about the age of ten or twelve, where the basic studies revolved around the three 'r's, liberally sprinkled with religious instruction. Following this, the student was ready to enter a classical school, where most his time was spent studying Latin, with the remainder applied to the study of rhetoric, logic, penmanship, and religion. Towards the end of his time at the classical school some time was spent studying Greek.

After leaving the classical school at about the age of sixteen or seventeen, the student was ready to enroll in one of the universities for the study of theology. Here he was exposed to several specialised subjects, including textual or exegetical theology (which included the study of Greek and Hebrew,) systematic or dogmatic theology, practical theology (including church polity and exercises in declamation and preaching), and church history itself. These studies lasted about four to five years, and thus the student found himself ready to start his ministerial career. Isaac must have been a good student because he matriculated from Groningen at the age of 19, on 14 September 1751.

Two examinations were required before a person became a fully-fledged minister of the gospel. To be admitted to the first examination, called the preparatory examination, the candidate had to submit various testimonials regarding his character and training. If these were satisfactory he was asked to appear before a classical committee to preach on a text that had been assigned to him in advance, and be examined on his knowledge of theology and ancient languages. If a candidate was well prepared and succeeded at this stage, he would be admitted to "public preaching", after he had signed the Formulae of Concord, which included the Thirty Seven Articles, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. Candidates also had to agree at this stage, without change, to the forms for the sacraments of Baptism and Lord's Supper.

A candidate who was admitted to "public preaching" after passing the preparatory examination was referred to as a proponent and was licensed *proponere*, that is, he was permitted "to make propositions from the pulpit, or preach, but not to administer the sacraments". To become ordained, and thereby enjoy the full powers of a minister, the proponent had to undergo a second examination, called the preremptory examination, which took place after he had received a call from a congregation. The second examination was similar to the first, and the amount of time that elapsed between the two examinations varied between a few weeks, and

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several years.

How long a time elapsed between Isaac's examinations we do not yet know, but he was installed as Predikant (pastor) of Echteld in the Province of Gelderland on 12 August 1759, and left, to take up the call to America, on 22 or 23 April 1765. [2]

Isaac and Henrica Verweij were married at Echteld on 27 January 1765. There were Verweij's in Echteld and the surrounding area. Henrica Verweij was baptised daughter of Gerit Verweij and Maria Van Der Linden, in Varik, a few kilometres south of Tiel on 22 September 1743. Isaac and Henrica's daughter Maria was baptised at Echteld on 3 February 1765, shortly before Isaac left for America. The entry for Maria's baptism was in fact the last one Isaac made in the Register at Echteld. She was left behind when Isaac and Henrica went to New York, probably with Isaac's younger sister Henrica who was also married in Echteld in November 1764, because she is recorded as not having left the village until 1793. Echteld, in the Classis of Tiel, is a group of settlements, on the north side of the Waal River, 8 km north east of Tiel, and about 35 km from Arnhem.

According to his own writings, he became Pastor in one or more communities in the Netherlands, and in a different Classis to the Classis of Amsterdam. He was serving as the Pastor at Echteld when called by the Classis of Amsterdam to go to America in 1765.

ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK*The Voyage – Oath of Denization*

Isaac and Henrica would have sailed from Amsterdam or Rotterdam, and the ship may have called on a port in England before embarking on the sea journey to America. Searches of Archives in Holland and America have not, so far, given us the name of the ship, which they travelled on or their port of embarkation in Holland. This journey would have taken six to eight weeks, and conditions on board would have been primitive. Their journey probably took place in the months of May to August, so they would not have suffered too much from the cold.

Isaac swore the Oath of Denization in New York on 3rd July 1766, almost a year after he arrived in the colony. The entry in the document is formulaic and adds nothing to our knowledge. [Laws ch. 1299.] [9]

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Isaac as Pastor of New Hackensack and Poughkeepsie – The Classical School at Fishkill – The Man Himself – Isaac and the Revolutionary War - Wife and Children – Descendants – Death and Burial

Isaac and Maria had arrived in New York by August 1765 as a note by the Rev. Lambertus De Ronde to his consistory of New York dated 20 August 1765 comments upon Isaac, "Rev. Rysdyk seems to me to be a very amiable man and

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was approved (as appears from the instrument of calling in the church book) and from my former congregation and classis, was installed by Dr Joh. Casp. Freyenmoet in the congregation of Poughkeepsie." Afterwards he administered the Holy Sacrament of Baptism to the following children: (there follows a list of baptisms.) [14]

This note by Isaac was written in response to the difficult situation he found after his installation. Feelings between the supporters of the Conferentie and Coetus factions had polarised to such an extent, that the supporters of the Coetus had organised their own Pastor for the congregations of Poughkeepsie and Fishkill who was already in residence when Isaac arrived, having been installed in 1763. The Rev. Henricus Schoonmaker had been ordained in the colony and was not therefore recognised as 'lawfully' ordained. and his appointment to Poughkeepsie and Fishkill was considered 'invalid' because it had not been approved by the Classis of Amsterdam. The result of this schism was that the opposing factions each appointed their own consistories, and the call to the Classis of Amsterdam was sent from the Conferentie supporters in the congregation for a pastor which resulted in the call being presented to Isaac. The call to Amsterdam was accompanied by a long letter outlining the problems from the Rev John C. Freyenmoet, member of the Conferentie, and pastor at Kinderhook, Claverack, and Livingston Manor. He wrote on behalf of the four combined congregations of "Po'keepsie, Viskil, New Hackinsack and Hoopwell", and asked for the Classis to supply them "as soon as possible, with an orthodox, learned and pious minister, who shall faithfully and constantly maintain the good order of the church, according to divine and human law, regard your Reverences as a high assembly, and therefore, with us, subordinate himself to you, adhering with us to your reverences in brotherly love, steadily and faithfully; so that by such a man, with the supporting assistance and blessing of God, the decaying condition of these calling congregations may again be restored, that the truth of our sound confession of faith, and our pure discipline, according to our laudable church rules, be protected and defended against so many interrupting errors in doctrine and discipline, which flood the church, not only with all kinds of erroneous spirits from the outside, but also with promoters of the present Coetus from the inside." There follows a long and detailed explanation of the frictions caused by this internal schism. He concludes with a plea to the Classis to "unauthorize" the appointment of Schoonmaker so that peace can be restored, and to send a peacemaker. The letter is dated 3rd October 1764. *[The full text of the letter is quoted in "First Reformed Church at Poughkeepsie" by Rev. A.P Van Gieson DD, published in 1893.]* [14]

For a time, Revs Rysdyk and Schoonmaker ministered to the two churches side by side, and the two churches functioned with two consistories. The rival ministers preached on alternate Sabbaths in Fishkill and Poughkeepsie, with Isaac preaching in one place while Rev. Schoonmaker preached in the other, and with the section of the two congregations which favoured the preacher attending the appropriate church. At times matters came to blows. At the time of the Rev Schoonmaker's installation at Poughkeepsie, the Conferentie party adherents closed the church against him, and his installation took place under a tree close by. On another occasion, feelings ran so high at Fishkill that the Coetus party knocked down the church door with an axe, and heads of families sat in the pews with clubs in their

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hands. Many times during the sermon people shouted irreverent and derogatory words at the preacher. [1]

This must have been a very trying time for both pastors, who, it is said, actually became and remained good friends. The Rev Schoonmaker lived in the Parsonage at Poughkeepsie, and Isaac lived firstly at Fishkill, and latterly at New Hackensack.

Travel between the churches must have been difficult, especially in inclement weather. Years earlier, in 1731, the Rev Cornelius Van Schie, had written to several ministers in Holland, "Many people were born, and grew up, in the woods, and know little of anything else, except what belongs to farming. Indeed it can hardly be believed what trouble and toil a minister has, to introduce any civility into these places where there never has been a minister before. For many people here are like the wild horses of the woods which have never yet been broken, and which will not allow the bit to be placed in their mouth till after some time." He also reported that the two churches, Fishkill and Poughkeepsie, were "three good hours from each other; and every other Sunday I must ride that distance, thither and back, through the woods and along steep paths." In view of this, and his having to visit widely scattered parishioners and preach occasionally at neighboring villages, it is no wonder that he added that, "A preacher here...by much horseback riding, and otherwise, wears out more clothes and other articles, than in Holland." [22] The situation had probably improved by the 1760s but travel must still have been difficult. This must have been especially true of the journeys which Isaac had to make, from time to time, to New York, and to New Paltz and North Marbletown in Ulster County, twenty miles north of Poughkeepsie and on the west side of the Hudson River, and to Kingston which was even further north.

Domine Meyer was the regular pastor at Kingston before Isaac's arrival, but was a Coetus pastor who refused to be swayed by correspondence from members of the Assembly exhorting him to toe the party line. "In reference to Dr Meyer", says one letter from Revs. Ritzema and De Ronde in December 1765 to the consistory at Kingston, "the truth is that he is not Pope in Kingston, but a minister, under the Consistory, and subject to its censure whenever his conduct tends otherwise than to the edification of the Church. Now among the sins mentioned in the 80 Art. as subjecting a minister to censure, is that of *making an open schism in the church*. And that Do. Meyer has been guilty of this sin is as clear as the day since he refused to join the Convention which the Classis and the Synod acknowledged, and to which your church has always been subordinate."

Domine Meyer was a Coetus Pastor and the Conferentie members of the church at Kingston had, to the great concern of the Assembly in New York, already invited Domine Cock to look after them. They had now also invited Isaac Rysdyk and Revs. Ritzema and De Ronde warned them that if they employed "the services of Do. Rysdyk, according to the advice of Do. Freyenmoet you bring him under the same circumstances in which Do. Cock was lately placed by your means, and you will perhaps be the means of great injury to him in his own church, which otherwise seems at present in a promising way to triumph over that little faction, which calls itself the Coetus, among those where he lives." As we have seen this was an optimistic assessment of the situation in Isaac's home congregations.

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not lacking gifts and accomplishments. I have given him all possible advice; he goes to a peaceable congregation. [36]

Isaac's arrival had been acknowledged by the Classis of Amsterdam to the Conferentie in a letter of April 7, 1766, thus: "We are pleased to hear of the arrival of Rev. Rysdyk. May God render his work acceptable to his saints, and may the labours of this man of peace, for such we take him to be, promote this precious boon." Their good wishes were well timed because Isaac's talents were already being tried, as we shall see.

Isaac is recorded as having preached his first sermon at Hopewell on 8th September 1765, followed by the baptisms of several children. He was at New Hackensack the following Sunday, and at Poughkeepsie the week after.

THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH AT NEW HACKENSACK

The Reformed (Dutch) Church of New Hackensack was organised in 1756. The services were held in private houses until 1766, when the first house of worship was erected. No record of the original members has been preserved, but at the time of the building of the church, there were thirty three in full communion. Capt. Cornelius Luyster and Tunis Wiltsie, as elders, and John the Baptist Kip and Adolph Swartwoud as deacons. The Agreement to build the church has survived in part, dated "31st of October 1700 and sixty five", and appended to it are the signatures of the purchasers of seats in the new building, headed by "Isaac Rysdyk, for 2 seats, £3-0-0."

In The Baptismal Register of the newly organised church of New Hakkensak on the Wappans Kill by Isaac Rysdyk, VDM

page 7 he prefaces his baptismal register: "Anno 1757. Copied to the 15th of September 1765 when I preached here for the first time from the notes of Rev. E. J. van Hoevenberg and the clerk." From 1757 to 1765 the records are sparse.

[Notes from Patricia Giannotti from copies of the original register. 18/5/99.]

FROM THE RECORDS OF THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH IN POUGHKEEPSIE

1765. Den 22 September ben ik, Isaac Rysdyk, alleen wettig Predikant der Nederduitsche herformde Gemeente van Poughkeepsie cum annexis ecclesiis na vertioning van wettige attestatien, so van der Hoog Eerw. Classis van Amsterdam, door welke myn Beroeping tot dese Gemeinte geapprobert is, als blykt uyt het Instrument van Beroeping, in het Kerkenboek geregisteert, als van myne vorige Gemeinte en Classis, door Dr Joh. Casp. Freyenmoet, in Gemeinte van Poughkeepsie ingewydt.

22 September 1765

"I, Isaac Rysdyk, alone lawful preacher of the Low Dutch Congregation of Poughkeepsie and Annexed Churches, after Presentation of Lawful Certificates, both from the Very Rev. Classis of Amsterdam by whom my call to this congregation

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of their Conferentie party sympathies "because the congregation of the New Paltz and its preacher, Do. Mauritius Goetschius have separated from the orderly subordination to the Reverend Classis of Amsterdam." They consequently surrendered to Do. Isaac Rysdyk their letter of dismissal from the congregation of Kingston which, having been read, was approved.

Dr Rysdyk and his Consistory having heard the (aforementioned) reasons, and read the letter of dismissal, certified the same to be legal and reasonable; wherefore they also fully approved of the building of the church with good wishes for God's much needed blessing in the founding, increase and upbuilding of this church and congregation.

"On 30th August 1767, License. Married by Do. Isaac Rysdyk: Peter Swart, Y.M, and Jannetje Person, Y.D., both born and living at Kingston." He also baptised three children on the same day.

Isaac supervised the installation of a new Consistory. "1769, Aug. 23rd. Were elected in the fear of God – As Elder: Salomon Louw, in place of the retiring Noach Eltinge, Esq. As Deacon: Jacob Du Boys in place of the retiring Petrus Van Wagena.

The above named brethren were subsequently installed in their offices by me, Isaac Rysdyk, on November 8, 1769"

In September 1770 Isaac was in Tappan, on the 26th, performing two baptisms at the "Irregular Congregation." [31] Tappan was a Coetus church so the Irregular Congregation was formed for the Conferentie members, and Isaac was one of six pastors who looked after their spiritual needs between 1767 and 1778.

Isaac was also involved as signatory for the approval of the calling of the Rev, Stephanus Goetchius to be pastor at New Paltz in 1777, when he signed, with Domine Rynier Van Nest, "The above call has been approved by the Reverend particular Assembly of Dutchess and Ulster Counties on the 26th day of May 1777." [24]

Isaac himself, though a leader of the Conferentie, had none of the narrow mindedness and bitterness of spirit that so typified many of his congregation and associates. He always sustained the character of peacemaker and it was he, together with the great and eminent Dr Henry Livingston, who was finally able to effect a reconciliation between the factions at the convention in New York City in 1771. [1]

Isaac was involved in the Assembly of the Conferenties almost as soon as he arrived on American soil. Acts of the Assembly of Ministers of the Conferentie on 8th October 1765 record him as one of the ministers present

In October 1772, Isaac presented to the General Synod, "a call made upon him in the congregation of Fishkill, being an addition to his former call in that place, to serve the congregation of Fishkill in the use alternately of the English and Dutch languages." The synod approved the new adjustment, in expectation that his

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Matters in Kingston came to a head in February 1766, when Revs. Rysdyk, Freyenmoet and Cock, with their consistories, as representatives of the neighbouring congregations to Kingston, met in Kingston to hear the case brought against Rev. Meyer by 113 members of the Kingston congregation. The hearing was deferred for a day "at the request of Do. Rysdyk, who lived at the greatest distance." On 12th February, all assembled in the Consistory Room at Kingston, ***** The eventual outcome of the hearing was that Do. Meyer still refused to subordinate himself to the Classis of Amsterdam, and that the Conferentie members of the Church at Kingston sent a call to Classis for another minister. Meyer himself wrote to Classis protesting about his treatment, but Classis ignored his letter and approved his removal from the ministry in the church at Kingston. (August 21, 1766.) Matters dragged on without resolution for another four years and in 1770 the Consistory at Kingston, wrote, via Isaac Rysdyk "president protem" asking Classis where their new pastor was. In a letter dated July 21 1771, Classis expressed surprise, that the Consistory had not received a reply, but said that as there was hope that Conferentie and Coetus would soon be reconciled, they did not want to stir up any more ill-feeling by sending a written dismissal of Rev. Meyer, and that when the "union of all the brethren should take place, the united body will be able to arrange things.. to the mutual satisfaction of all parties.." Classis gave them a free hand to look after an able pastor. They were unlikely to get one from Holland as Classis was finding it difficult to find enough suitable candidates at home. [36]

Isaac went to Kingston on a regular basis between 1766 and 1773 when Kingston installed its new regular pastor. The Baptism register at Kingston illustrates vividly the impact of the conflict between Conferentie and Coetus parties on the normal running of the life of a congregation. Between 1766 and 1773 at least five different pastors performed baptisms for the Kingston Congregation. For the Conferentie, Dominies Rysdyk, Cock, Kuypers and Freyenmoet, and for the Coetus Domine Hermannus Meyer all performed baptisms. Isaac was at Kingston 2nd September to 5th October 1766, 9th November 1768, 4th June to 14th August and 12th November 1769, 10th October 1770, 29th July 1771, 22nd January, 1st and 2nd August and 4th November 1772, and 21st September to 3rd October 1773, baptising sometimes one, and sometimes more than a dozen children. (Records for 1767 are missing.) [26]

As a result of the schism in Kingston, Isaac was also called to New Paltz in Ulster County, to supervise the starting of a new church (The Second Church of New Paltz). "On August 29 1767, came together at the house of Henricus Dubois, Domine Isaac Rysdyk with his Consistory and five members of the Reformed Nether Dutch Church who have heretofore belonged to the congregation of Kingston, viz: Josia Eltinge, Noach Eltinge, Petrus Van Wagena, Jacob DuBoys and Dirk D. Wyncoop, who with some other members of the said Nether Dutch Church. Have built a church here for the purpose of observing their most holy religion, and had requested Domine Isaac Rysdyk, Instructor at Pochkeepsie and Fishkill, as neighboring preacher, to be present at the organization and consecration of a Christian Nether Dutch congregation. (He) had been specially and in writing charged and authorized by his Consistory (to be present.)" The members had wanted to form their own church away from both Kingston and the old New Paltz churches because

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dismissal from Poughkeepsie would thereupon be regularly affected, and appointed a committee to effect such a dismissal. [*Minutes. Gen Synod, vol I, pp 31,36,37.*] The committee, in due time performed the duty thus assigned, and the records of Isaac's baptisms in Poughkeepsie end in November 1773. From then on he ministered to the churches of Fishkill, Hopewell and New Hackensack.

Despite this call to preach in two languages in Fishkill, his ministry in the other two congregations seems to have remained exclusively in Dutch. The consistory records are in Dutch until 1783. After this period, from 1783 until his death, Isaac had the assistance of the Rev Isaac Blauvelt as colleague in charge of Fishkill and Hopewell, while Isaac himself remained in sole charge of New Hackensack.

Isaac was described as one of the most learned men in the Dutch Church, writing in Greek and Latin with as much facility as in his native Dutch. The Church records kept by him are written in a beautiful hand, and mostly in Dutch. His pastorate ran through the troublesome days of the revolution. His discretion, ability and personal excellence well fitted him for his difficult mission. [1]

The War for the Independence of the American Colonies affected everyone. Although the Articles of Union signed by the Ministers of the Reformed Church in 1771 had ostensibly ended the dispute between Coetus and Conferentie Parties, the sentiments of the protagonists were reflected in the political arguments that followed. Leading up to 1776, in general terms, the Coetus adherents sided with the Independence movement, and the Conferentie Members opted for the status quo, which broadly reflected their previous positions on religious autonomy.

In the congregations, sides were taken again along the old lines. "The contest between the colonies and the mother country" writes Dr A.B. Taylor, Minister of the English Neighborhood Dutch Reformed church in the 1850s, "was every day becoming more and more violent in the fierce heat of the controversy. The dogged, fixed opinions in the political and religious matters of the settlers was brought out in bold relief. The great questions of the day arrayed neighbor against neighbor, divided households, and were even particularly alluded to from the pulpit. Scenes of violence among them were frequent. The country was ravaged, and, not far from the present church, on the Bulls Ferry Road, tradition tells of neighbors who met in pitched battle and showed the most bitter hatred of each other, the angry feelings aroused in that period, lasted years after and were even carried to the grave..."

"Every Dutch Reformed minister who was a Tory during the War (Ritzema, Kuypers, Rubel, Boelen, deRonde and Kern,) was a former conferentie minister; every coetus minister was a patriot. One or two conferentie ministers may have held somewhat equivocal views (e.g. Rysdyk and Van der Linde,) but none was an active patriot." [27] So Isaac was still attempting to tread the middle path at this time although his sentiments seem to have been with the Tories.

In 1777, the State of New York Commission for Conspiracies "Ordered that Rev'd Isaac Rysdyk, Teunis V, Bunschoten and Zachariah Sickels be requested to attend this Board to give evidence against Rudolphus Ritzma on Thursday next."

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The judgement of the Board was given later. " [Col Ritzema's Case Determined.] The Board taking into Consideration the Case of Rudolphe Ritzema Esq'r and having maturely considered the Depositions of several Witnesses in the Minutes of the Late Committee for Conspiracies, &ca. Respecting the Charge exhibited against him.

"Resolved that in the opinion of this Board the Charge agst Rudolphus Ritzema Esqr of his having been in the City of New York since it was in the possession of the Enemy is not supported, and that he be acquitted thereof accordingly.

"Resolved that Rudolphus Ritzema Esqr be discharged.

"The Board Having been informed that Mr Ritzema had of late frequently declared Sentiments unfriendly to the America Cause and that Messrs Rysdyk and others could prove same and these Witnesses having been cited & examined with respect to the Matter, it appeared to the Board that tho' he might, relative to some Measures now pursuing by the Country, have expressed himself improperly, yet that it proceeded rather from Disgust and Disappointment in being dismissed from the Service than from the Disaffection or Enmity to the Cause and Rights of America."

[28]

Ritzema was later advised of the Boards findings and admonished to be "more circumspect in his Behavior and Conversation for the future."

An account of the life of Pastor Solomon Froeligh, a noted Whig minister, gives more detail of the uncertain times during the Revolution: "Crossing into New Jersey (*after leaving Long Island in a hurry to avoid capture by the British,*) Domine Froeligh stopped over at Hackensack, preached once or twice at the United Churches, and then went north to Fishkill, where the New York Committee of Safety was sitting, and where the Conferentie Domine Rysdyk was pastor of a recently divided church. As might be expected, here too the Conferentie group seem to have been Tories, one at least of Rysdyk's consistory having been banished as disloyal by the state government. The records show that in an attempt to get him back Rysdyk testified as to his morals but refused to express an opinion about his patriotism.

"The old Coetus group at Fishkill which had been without a pastor rallied around Froeligh, and partisan feeling, renewed by civil war, was bitter. Col. Allison said that Fishkill was swarming with snivelling Tories that fall, reporting that he had confined ninety six of them in a balcony of the Dutch Church one night in October, hardly an experience to reconcile local Dutch Reformed Tories with Whig Domine Froeligh.

"After a year or so, Froeligh and Rysdyk sat down with their consistories and worked out a plan for uniting the congregations; shortly thereafter Froeligh left the Fishkill pulpit to Rysdyk alone, a move which marked the wholehearted entry of Rysdyk into the American party of the Dutch Reformed, after years of assistance to its enemies.

"A passing reference to the two preachers in Governor Clinton's papers indicates that Froeligh was then at Poughkeepsie for a time, Domine Rysdyk having petitioned the Governor for delay in the execution of a criminal so that he 'and his brother in the Gospel' Domine Froeligh at Poughkeepsie, could 'visit a Soul, perhaps panting after Salvation, and only in want of ministerial instruction,' and do what they could in that way. When Governor Clinton explained all the circumstances, Rysdyk

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did not press the request" [27] [Froeligh was pastor at Poughkeepsie from 1776-1780.]

The full text appears in "*The Public Papers of George Clinton.*"

William Jaycocks, under sentence of death, had appealed to "his Excellency George Clinton Esqr., Governor and Comm'dr in Chief of the State of New York." for a "respite of time" in which to be "Reconciled within myself that I am yet fit to Leave this world." The petition is dated April 20th 1779.

Isaac's appeal to Governor Clinton on his behalf reads:

"May it please yr Excellency.

S'r, I have been very earnestly entreated by James Livingston Esq., and ye friends of Mr Jacocks, one of the prisoners condemned, to attend him during these awful moments in his preparation for another world, and would have complied with the reasonable Request with all Readiness, but having been hindered to day in the performance of this pastoral duty, as will be ye case doubtless also tomorrow by insurmountable Obstacles in my family*, I cannot but heartily join with the friends of Mr Jacocks. That the Execution, if it be in any ways convenient with the Circumstances of the Law, might be deferred for a few days, that there might be Sufficient time & opportunity to give this wretched youth, who Seems to be very desirous to have some intercourse at large with ministers about his eternal concerns; when together with the minister of Poghkeepsie, I wo'd be willing & very desirous to attend him in this necessary & holy Employment to the utmost of my power.

Your Excellency will doubtless thereby, greatly oblige a number of Respectable parsons, & among them more particularly Your Excellencies most humble & most obedient servant

Isaak Rysdyk

New Hakkensack April 21, 1779

For His Excellency Governor G. Clinton Esq.

Governor Clinton's reply to Isaac indicates that he believes that Jaycocks had had plenty of time to reconcile himself and prepare "for the great and Important Change which he is so shortly to undergo." He says that he believes the prisoner to be fully deserving of his fate and having indicated from the start that there would be no reprieve, some of the less sincere petitioners were simply trying to gain time so that they could effect an escape for Jaycocks, and that the burden on his guards in the Gaol at Poughkeepsie should be ended as soon as possible.

Isaac replies to this missive as follows:

N.Hackensack 21 April 1779.

S'r, Your Excellencies kind Condescension in acquainting me with the reasons, why a Respite should not be granted to the Criminal Jaycocks, inspires me with the warmest Acknowledgements, and dictates the few Lines, wherewith I am troubling y'r Excellency another Time. Indeed I ventured to write a few lines to y'r Excellency

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this morning in favour of this unhappy youth, only with a view, to enjoy the Opportunity together with my Brother in the Gospel, ye Rev'd Mr Freligh, to visit a Soul, perhaps panting after Salvation, & only in want of sufficient Instruction & Direction towards the Accomplishment of these great and desirable events. But now, fully acquiescing in your Excellencies Letter (as I cannot be spared from home tomorrow morning*, and there is a Minister in the place:) I leave & commend this wretched Criminal to a merciful God; whom, if he would Seeck for him earnestly, he will find infinitely more propitious to him, than either a Governor or Minister or indeed even his best friends & Relatives can be Supposed to be. I am with deep Respect, S'r, Your Excellencies most humble & most Obedient Servant,

Isaak Rysdyk

For His Excellency Governor Clinton.

*[*The reason for Isaac being needed at home was the birth of his son Petrus on 21 April 1779.]*

An earlier excerpt from the Clinton Papers details the case of Myndert Harris, also under sentence of death, this time for burglary, with whose case Isaac was also involved.

Harris Petition. "To His Excellency George Clinton, Esq., Governor &c of New York, We the Subscribers, Inhabitants of Dutchess County, Faithful Subjects to the State of New York.....and Hearty Friends to the Independence of America, Beg leave to recommend Myndert Harris, now under sentence of death, as an object of your Excellency's clemency. We hope his future good behaviour will convince the world that his Preservation hath not been in vain. (signed) Henry Livingston Jun., John Frear, Elias Bunschoten, Solomon Freligh V.D.M., Isaac Rysdike, V.D.M., Jonas Kelsey.

The Humble Petition of the Subscribers most Humbly sheweth.

Whereas, Mindred Harris, son of Joseph Harris being justly Condemned to Die by the Late Honourable Court held at Poughkeepsie to the Most Unspeakable Grief of his Father and Mother, we the Subscribers most earnestly pray that it may please His Excellency to have Compassion on the most Distressed Father & Mother & Relation of said Harrisetc., etc."

[Harris had been tried at Poughkeepsie on 13 April 1778 and condemned to death. "Myndert Harris of Beekman's Precinct, yeoman; indicted for a burglary in the house of Daniel Way in Beekman with William Smith in Dec. last."]

There were four petitions for Harris in all, signed by over seventy five local residents, including all the militia officers from Beekman and the foreman of the Grand Jury. Myndert Harris was evidently pardoned but later joined the Loyalists and removed to Nova Scotia in 1784, and died in Upper Canada in 1823 aged 75 years. [GCP 1337.] [17]

CONSISTORY NOTES, NEW HACKENSACK.

Many congregations had tremendous difficulties paying the salaries for their pastors,

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and many pastors must have found themselves considerably out of pocket over a number of years. The congregations that Isaac ministered to were no exception and it is plain from minutes of Consistory that the problem was a longstanding one.

On May 28, at a Meeting in the house of Mr Theophilus Anthony, the following was resolved:

1

After prayer, the minister, presiding, having stated that the meeting of the Rev. Classis of the Middle District was to be held at Po'keepsie next Tuesday the 2d of June, to which also from this congregation an elder should be sent as delegate, Mr Aris van der Bilt, elder, was chosen for that purpose, to whom credentials were handed.

2

The Rev. Consistory, having taken into consideration the condition of this church, have instructed the said elder to lay the present state of affairs of this church before the Rev., Classis; namely that whereas the Rev. Mr Rysdyk their minister, owing to the non-payment of his salary by the churches of Fishkill and Hopewell, has found himself obliged to enter into an agreement with them, whereby, in exchange for the payment of the arrears of his salary, and a sum of money in addition, he had to release them from their obligation toward him, so that the congregation of New Hakkensack, now standing alone and by themselves, are not able to raise a sufficient salary for the support of their minister. He is therefore to request the Rev. Classis, in the name of the Consistory, to take this matter into consideration, and if possible, to devise some means whereby this congregation may be enabled to support his Reverence and thereby to continue to enjoy the benefit of his services.

Nothing much was resolved, because a year later the problem arose once more.

Minutes of a meeting of the Consistory of New Hackensack 18 May 1790 held at the house of Domine Isaac Rysdyk.

Art II. The presiding minister informed the Brethren that last year an elder, on the part of this congregation made a proposal to the Rev. Classis regarding the inability of this congregation to raise a sufficient salary for the support of their minister, Domine Isaac Rysdyk, with the request that they might receive their Reverences' counsel and advice in the matter; whereupon the Rev Classis resolved to submit this matter through their delegates to the most Rev. Synod for their deliberation and advice. The said delegates, however, for weighty reasons, have done nothing in the matter, but postponed action until the present year, so that it is necessary to bring this matter again to the notice of the Rev Classis, namely, that Mr Isaac Rysdyk has served this congregation as their pastor and minister faithfully and diligently for a period of more than 24 years; that they are not only satisfied with his useful services and his teaching and conduct, but, if it please the Lord, wish to continue to enjoy the same; that his congregation, however, being now alone and by themselves, and no longer combined with the two neighbouring congregations of Viskil and Hopewell, owing to the dismissal of Dom. Rysdyk by those said congregations, find themselves unable to raise a sufficient salary for the support of his Reverence and his large

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family and that they therefore humbly request this Reverend body to be pleased to take this matter into serious consideration and as far as possible to give them benefit of advice and assistance.

Later in the same meeting the problem of 'putting the church yard into proper order' came up and it was resolved to employ a workman to do the work, with two members of the Consistory guaranteeing the payment for the work.

The final article of this meeting concerned the rent for Isaac's house:

Art VI. As to the house rent of the minister's leased dwelling for the year 1789, of which one third must be paid by this congregation, it was resolved to repay the same partly out of the poor fund, and partly by means of a collection to be taken up in and outside of the church. Whereupon the Rev. Consistory, after giving thanks to God, separated in love and peace.

Q.T.*

Isaac Rysdyk, *Praeses*. [34]

[*Q. T. *Quod Testor* - which I certify or attest.]

"He was," says Dr Brownlee, "in his day, considered the most learned theologian in the Dutch Church. He was familiar with the classics. He wrote in Greek, but especially in Latin, with as much facility as in his native Dutch, and in the University of Groningen, he was as familiar with Hebrew as with his mother tongue. But, great as were his attainments in the sacred and profane classics, his theological readings and attainments were no less extensive and accurate. His sermons were specimens of the analytical form of discussion. The body of them were judicious and masterly dissertations, and the applications were practical and full of affectionate consolations, warnings, and reprovings." He was of commanding personal appearance, and, in his manners, an old-time gentleman. According to the custom of those days, he usually rode on horseback, wearing a cocked hat, and white flowing wig, and the customary clerical dress. On the Sabbath he rode up to the church door where the sexton was waiting to take his horse, and dismounting, would pass into the church and kneel in silent prayer, at the foot of the pulpit. He was also principal of a classical school at Fishkill, in which John H. Livingston and other eminent men received their earlier education. Synod indorsed his academy in 1772. He was received in 1765 by his congregations with great love and joy. He belonged to the Conferentie party, but never manifested much bitterness of spirit, and at the second meeting in 1772, to adopt articles of union between the parties, he was made president. He lived in troublous times, both for church and state. Many of his congregation were Tories in the Revolution, and party spirit ran high. (see "*Kip's Hist. Dis.*" "*Mag. R.D.C.*," ii. 244. "*Amst. Cor.*" "*Sprague's Annals.*" [1])

A similar description, this time by Brinkerhoff, quoted in Hasbrouk [21] says, "Educated in the best universities abroad, the accomplishments of the gentleman and the scholar were so blended as to be inseparable. His affability and address are to this day spoken of, and his appearance is said to have been very imposing. In person the Doctor was rather stoutly made, and, as was the custom of that day, rode through his charge on horseback. He always wore a cocked hat and wig, and invariably lifted his hat from his head in passing anyone, and gave them a friendly

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salutation. Upon Sabbath mornings he would ride to the church door and dismount, handing his horse to the sexton, who stood in readiness waiting his coming."

Isaac and Henrica recorded the baptisms of six of their children at New Hackensack. They, with the names of their sponsors are all to be found in the Registers of the Reformed Dutch Church of New Hackensack as follows: [15]

Page 12. 1766, Aug 3. Doms Isaac Rysdyk and Henrica Verwey, child Henrica Alida born 30 July 1766.

Witnesses Capt'n Jacobus Zwartwoud and Alida Brinkerhoff. mar.

Gilbert Livingston and Catharina Crannel. Mar.

(Elizabeth Crannel is also sponsor in the Register entry of Hopewell DRC. The baptism was also recorded at Poughkeepsie.)

Page 23. 1777 Jan 12 Doms Izaak Rysdyk, pastor at this place and Henrica Verwey, child Johanna born Dec 29, 1776.

Witnesses Aris Van Der Bilt and his wife.

Page 28. 1779 May 16. Doms Isaac Rysdyk and Henrica Verwey, child Petrus born Apr 21, 1779

Witnesses Thomas Storm and Elizabeth Graham, his wife.

Page 32. 1782 Apr 20. The Rev. Isaac Rysdyk pastor at this place, and Juffrow Henrica Verwey his wife, child Elizabeth born Mar 28, 1782

No Witnesses listed.

Page 36. 1784 Sep 19. The Rever'd Isaac Rysdyk minister of this congregation, and Henrica Verwey, child John born Aug 12, 1784

No Witnesses listed.

Page 42. 1786 Dec 17. The Rever'd Isaac Rysdyk, Henrica Verwey, child Johanna born Oct 15, 1786.

No Witnesses listed.

There is firm evidence from the account books of Dr Stephen Thorn, who looked after the community of New Hackensack and the surrounding area in the 1780s and 1790s that Garret Rysdyk, father of William Mapes Rysdyk, owner of the famous colt "Hambletonian" was also Isaac's son, born in 1770. This confirms that there were more children born to Isaac and Henrica between 1766 and 1776, and the likelihood is that, in order to conform with the Dutch naming practices, Sarah, and probably another son, Jacobus or James, were born during this time. Sarah was probably born in 1767, and Jacobus after Garret circa 1771/2. Jacobus must have survived until after the birth of John in 1784, or his name would probably have been used again. The names reappear again in the families of Garret and his children. [23]

Isaac was listed among the Tax Payers of the original Town of Fishkill, south ward, in 1776-70, 1772-1775, and 1777. [Not all years' returns survive.] [6]

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1790 Census.Fishkill, Dutchess County, New York

House of Isaac Rysdyk

Free White males of the age of 16 and upwards, including heads of families: 2
[Isaac and Garret (20).]

Free white males under 16: 2 [John (15) and Petrus (11)]

Free white females, including heads of families: 6

[Henriette, Henrica Alida (23), Elizabeth (18), Johanna (14) and 2 others.]

All other free: - (none)

Slaves: - (none) [19]

Town of FishkillSchools

"Rev Dr Isaac Rysdyk taught a classical school in Fishkill, as appears from advertisements published in the paper of that time, and the General Synod of the Dutch Church in 1772." [11]

On the site of the school there is a notice which reads: " First Academy in the County 1765-1780 located on this hill. Conducted by the Rev Isaac Rysdyk. Used for Military Hospital in 1777. [State Education Department 1985.] [13]

The first academy in Dutchess County, located midway between Fishkill and Brinkerhoffville, was run by Reverend Isaac Rysdyk and Reverend Graham. It was connected with the Presbyterian Church nearby, The academy moved to Poughkeepsie after the Revolutionary War. [13]

Isaac died on Sunday 2nd November 1790.

"He died on Sabbath morning, very sudden, from paralysis. The congregation of New Hackensack, Hopewell and Fishkill had assembled that morning for service, when a messenger arrived and informed them that Rysdyck was dead. So sudden and unexpected was the message to them that many of the congregation wept. They had heard their pastor's last sermon; he had delivered his last message; he had left home and friends to come here to spend his life in his Master's service, and he died at his post. He was found dead alone in his room, his sermon in manuscript lying before him. The faithful ambassador of Christ knows no fear like the soldier. Flushed with the expectation of victory, he girds on his armor and enlists in his Master's service, and is ready and willing to spend his life for his guilty fellow men, whenever and wherever the lot may be opened to him. So it was with Rysdyck. He had spent his life in preaching the gospel.

His funeral took place the following Tuesday at New Hackensack. There was no funeral sermon preached, as it was not customary in those days. The elders and deacons were the pall bearers, and his remains were placed beneath the floor in front of the pulpit, (an ancient Dutch custom,) in the church at New Hackensack, which stood from 1765 to 1835. His remains lay there undisturbed until the old edifice was taken down, in 1834, when they were removed and buried in the graveyard. In the yard is the following inscription: 'The remains of the Rev Isaac Rysdyck, the first pastor of this church, lie in the southeast corner of this plot.' [3]

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Isaac's gravestone still stands in the 'pastor's plot' in New Hackensack burial ground, the inscription much corroded by acid rain. It reads "Rev Isaac Rysdyk, first pastor of this church, died in 1790." There are further lines of inscription now too corroded to be deciphered. They used to read as follows: "He was settled over the churches of Poughkeepsie, Fishkill, Hopewell and New Hackensack in 1765, - and continued his ministry in the three latter churches until his death, when he was buried in front of the pulpit of the former house of worship which stood here from 1766 to 1835." [14]

His death was announced in the *Poughkeepsie Journal*. "Last Sunday, died at Hackensack (Fishkill,) the Rev. Isaac Rysdyk, minister of the Dutch Church at that place, and on Tuesday his remains were interred in said church..." [The entry is apparently incomplete on the Card Index which replaces the actual newspaper which has not survived. *Adriance Memorial Library, Poughkeepsie.*]

Isaac died intestate. Henriette was granted Letters of Administration.

THE PEOPLE of the STATE of NEW-YORK, by the Grace of God, FREE and INDEPENDENT.

To *Henrietta Rysdyck* widow of the Rev'd Isaac Rysdyck late of Fishkill Town, clerk deceased, Send Greeting.

WHEREAS *the said Isaac Rysdyck* as is alledged, lately died intestate, having whilst still living, and at the time of *his* death, Goods, Chattels, or Credits within this State, by Means whereof, the ordering and granting Administration of all and singular said Goods, Chattels, and Credits; and also the auditing, allowing, and final discharging the Account thereof doth appertain unto us; and we being desirous that the said Goods, Chattels, and Credits of the said deceased may be well and faithfully administered, applied and disposed of, do grant unto you, the said *Henrietta Rysdyck* full Power by these presents, to administer, and faithfully dispose of all and singular the said Goods Chattels, and Credits, to ask, demand, recover. And receive the Debts, which unto the said deceased, whilst living, and at the Time of *his* death did belong, and to pay the Debts which the said deceased did owe, so far as such Goods, Chattels, and Credits will thereto extend, and the Law require: Hereby requiring you to make, or cause to be made, a perfect Inventory of all and singular the Goods, Chattels, and Credits of the said deceased, which have, or shall come into your Hands, Possession, or Knowledge, and the same so made, to exhibit, or cause to be exhibited into the Office of the Surrogate of the said County of *Dutchess* at or before the expiration of six Calendar Months from the Date hereof; and also to render a just and true Account of Administration when thereunto required: And we do by these Presents, depute, constitute, and appoint you the said *Henrietta Rysdyck* Administratrix of all the singular Goods, Chattels, and Credits which were of the said *Isaac Rysdyck*.

IN TESTIMONY whereof we have caused the Seal of Office of our said Surrogate to be hereunto affixed,

WITNESS *Gilbert Livingston* Esquire, Surrogate of the said County, at *Poughkeepsie* the *twelfth* Day of *February* in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and *ninety one* and of our Independence the *fifteenth* - *Gilbert Livingston* Surrogate

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*- Dutchess County Ss Recorded the above letter of Administration of Henrietta Rysdyck this 12th day of February 1791.
Gilbert Livingston, Surrogate.*

[Original lodged at the Office of the Surrogate, Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, New York.]

THE NEXT GENERATIONS

After Isaac's death, Henriette moved initially into the schoolhouse at New Hackensack with six of her children. By 1804 Henriette is mentioned as beneficiary under the will of Robert H Livingston of Poughkeepsie, as 'friend' of the testator. "I direct a legacy of one hundred dollars to be given to my friend Henrietta Rysdyk for her tenderness and affection during my sickness." She also witnessed the will of Thomas Fenner of Poughkeepsie on 22 October 1813, so it is likely that she and the family had moved initially into Poughkeepsie. The census of 1800 records Henriette (Harriet) as head of household, but by 1811 she had moved to New York. She appears, living with daughter Johanna in the directory for that year, at 60 Mulberry Street. She died at the same address in New York on the 8th June 1813, and her death was announced in the *New York Weekly Museum*.

Sarah Rysdyk married John Elsworth. John Elsworth is almost certain to have been the son of Verdine Elsworth, and was therefore member of a well known New York family, which originated with Theophilus Elsworth, who was born in Bristol, circa 1625, married in Amsterdam in 1647, and arrived in New York circa 1652. This was not the conclusion reached by Frank Doherty in his study of the 18th century inhabitants of Beekman Town, by a process of elimination, but his conclusion is not substantiated with documentary evidence, whereas there is now strong evidence to support John's descent from Verdine. [17]

John Elsworth and Sarah Rysdyk married circa 1784, and their first child, Susanna was born 21 July 1785, and baptised at New Hackensack 13 February 1788, on the same day as their second daughter Harriot, born 23 July 1786. It is possible that these two children were born away from New Hackensack, and baptised together when John and Sarah returned to Dutchess County, by grandfather Isaac. Henriette is sponsor to two of their children. John and Sarah had four children baptised at New Hackensack as follows: [15]

Page 46. 1788, Feb 13 John Elsworth and Sarah Rysdyk child Susanna, born July 21, 1785. Witness, Mary Widow Gillaspie

Page 46. 1788, Feb 13, John Elsworth Sarah Rysdyk. Child Harriot, born July 23, 1786. Witnesses Asuerus Elsworth and Henriette Rysdyk.

Page 49. 1789, Nov 1, John Elsworth and Sarah Rysdyk. Child Mary, born Oct 1, 1789. Witnesses Mary Elsworth and Henriette Rysdyk.

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Page 50. 1791, Dec 4, John Ellsworth and Sarah Rysdick, child Dorothy, born Sep 7, 1791. Witnesses Verdine Ellsworth and Dorothy Ellsworth.

By 1793/4, John and Sarah had moved to New York, and a fifth child, Verdine was born.

Trinity Church, Register of Baptisms, volume 1 page 318.

March 28, 1794, Verdine born Feb'y 21, 1794, Parents John and Sarah Ellsworth. Sponsors George Gillaspay, Mary Gillaspay.

Verdine was named for his grandfather, who had been sponsor to his elder sister Dorothy. Verdine and his wife Dorothy died within weeks of each other in 1810.

John probably died in 1802. Sarah died before 1826, when letters of administration were granted to her son Verdine. Verdine moved to Fairfield, Connecticut in the mid 1830s where he built a substantial house at Black Rock, 115, Ellsworth Avenue, which stood until 1968. In 1837 he purchased 692 acres of land in Michigan. He had, with his brother-in-law, Thaddeus Phelps, purchased a vault in Marble Cemetery, New York, where he buried three of his children. After the move to Connecticut these bodies were removed, presumably to a burial site nearer to Verdine's Fairfield home. In the 1850s he owned and ran a shipbuilding yard at Black Rock, which he sold in 1856. He died, intestate, in 1874, at Black Rock, and Letters of Administration were granted in Passaic, New Jersey, to his only surviving child, Julia, wife of Charles Aycrigg, nephew of Congressman, John Bancker Aycrigg. His estate amounted to a little over \$8,000, and included bonds, stock, some cash, a gold watch and a \$15 feather bed.

Mary/Maria Ellsworth married, at Trinity Church, New York, on 25 April 1811, John Oldham, who was born in London, England, on 3 August 1787. They had at least five children, Ann Maria, born 11 April 1813, Sarah Ellsworth, born 4 February 1817, Eleanor, born 3 March 1819, Thomas born 7 October 1821, and Dorothea, born in 1826/7. [20] John Oldham was a Merchant, and seems to have been connected with the cotton trade. Not long after Dorothea's birth, the family moved to Pernambuco (Recife), Brazil, where John Oldham set up in business, as John Oldham & Companhia, in the Rua da Cadiera, in Pernambuco, where he is recorded by 1831. At this time he signs, with others, a petition for the renunciation of the English Chaplain of Recife. [5]

About 1831 or 1832 Anna Maria married James Ryder, the son of James Ryder, a Merchant in Liverpool, England. Three children were born and baptised in Pernambuco; John Oldham Ryder (1833), James Ryder (1834) and Maria Ryder (1835) all baptised in the English Church in Pernambuco on 11 October 1835. James returned to Liverpool in about 1836, and their fourth child, Edward Augustus Ryder, great grandfather of the writer, was born on 18 July 1837, at 18 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool, and christened at St Bride's Liverpool on 2 September 1840.

John Oldham was preparing to leave Recife in February 1838, and had advertised in the local newspaper, the "Diario de Pernambuco", his house in the Madalena Way, his slaves, and furniture and wine for sale by auction, together with the contents of

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his business premises. Whether he was leaving because he was ill, or whether he fell ill after making the decision to leave Brazil, we do not know, but he died on 3 March 1838, and was buried the following day in the English Cemetery, where his marble gravestone still stands. Maria must have left Brazil soon after, because she and Dorothea and one of her grandchildren, were living at 89 Grove Street, Liverpool in 1841. She died on 2 September 1859, at Princes Park Terrace, Liverpool, and was buried in the graveyard at St George, Everton.

Sarah Ellsworth Oldham married Augustus Sydney Corbett in Pernambuco circa 1836, and had 5 children. Augustus was also a merchant in the city. Eleanor Oldham married Edward Comber of Liverpool, Merchant, in Pernambuco on 3 March 1837, and had 15 children. Some of the Comber family stayed in Recife, where their descendants still live. Other branches moved to Bahia, Rio, and Portugal.

The Ryder family in Liverpool were General and Cotton Merchants in the city, with offices in Pernambuco, Bahia and Manchester. They fell foul of the difficulties in the Cotton Market, which befell many companies in the 1860s due to the strife in America, and the company went bankrupt in 1871. Meanwhile, younger members of the family found their way to Australia (1826), and Fiji (1865) where they pioneered the growing of Sea Island cotton, and where their descendants still live. Other Ryders went to Peru and Panama.

CONCLUSION

Isaac Rysdyk personified the pioneering spirit of the Dutch Reform Church in the later part of the eighteenth century. Plucked from a secure position as Predikant in his native Holland, he took his wife to an outpost at the edge of the civilised world thousands of miles from his roots, to become a quietly dignified influence for compromise and peace in the maelstrom of religious politics in the colony of New York. He seems to have been greatly respected by his congregations, and by his colleagues in the Reformed Dutch Church, and had he lived longer than his 58 years, may have become one of the influential leaders of the Reformed Dutch Church in the State of New York.

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NOTE For this brief history I have quoted extensively from Gerald De Jong's "The Dutch Reformed Church in the American Colonies." [10] Bibliography references for this source do not appear in the text. I acknowledge this source, and all the help and encouragement received from my many correspondents, with gratitude.

INDEX OF PEOPLE**Aycrigg**

Charles

Julia

Corbett

Augustus Sydney

Elsworth/Ellsworth

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Ahasuerus (II)

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Maria

Theophilus or Christopher

Oldham

Anna Maria

Dorothea

Eleanor

John

Sarah Elsworth

Thomas

Rijdsdijk/Rysdyk

Elizabeth

Garret

Henrica Alida

Isaak/Isaac

Garret

Jacobus

Johanna

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Ryder

Edward Augustus