

= Kiliaen van Rensselaer (merchant) =

Kiliaen van Rensselaer (Dutch : [ˈkʲiljaːn vʌn ˈrɛnsˌlaːr] ; 1586 , Hasselt , Overijssel ? buried 7 October 1643 , Amsterdam) was a Dutch diamond and pearl merchant from Amsterdam who was one of the founders and directors of the Dutch West India Company , being instrumental in the establishment of New Netherland .

He was one of the first patroons , but the only one to become successful . He founded the Manor of Rensselaerswyck in what is now mainly New York 's Capital District . His estate remained throughout the Dutch and British colonial era and the American Revolution as a legal entity until the 1840s . Eventually , that came to an end during the Anti @-@ Rent War .

Kiliaen van Rensselaer was born in the province of Overijssel to Hendrick Kiliaensz van Rensselaer , a soldier from Nijkerk in the States army of the duke of Upper Saxony , and Maria Pafraet , descendant of a well @-@ known printers ' dynasty . To keep from risking his life in the army like his father , he apprenticed under his uncle , a successful Amsterdam jeweler . He too became a successful jeweler and was one of the first subscribers to the Dutch West India Company upon its conception .

The concept of patroonships may have been Kiliaen van Rensselaer 's ; he was likely the leading proponent of the Charter of Freedoms and Exemptions , the document that established the patroon system . His patroonship became the most successful to exist , making full use of his business tactics and advantages , such as his connection to the Director of New Netherland , his confidantes at the West India Company , and his extended family members who were eager to emigrate to a better place to farm . Van Rensselaer married twice and had at least eleven children . When he died sometime after 1642 , two succeeded him as patroons of Rensselaerswyck .

Van Rensselaer had a marked effect on the history of the United States . The American van Rensselaers all descend from Kiliaen 's son Jeremias and the subsequent Van Rensselaer family is noted for being a very powerful and wealthy influence in the history of New York and the Northeastern United States , producing multiple State Legislators , Congressmen , and two Lieutenant Governors in New York .

= = Early years = =

Kiliaen van Rensselaer was born in Hasselt , Overijssel , Netherlands in 1586 . The exact day of his birth is unknown . He was the son of Hendrick van Rensselaer and Maria Pafraet . His father was a captain in the Dutch army until his death at the Siege of Ostend in early June 1602 .

With his father usually not home (and eventually meeting his death) because of a military career , van Rensselaer 's mother sent him to apprentice with his uncle , Wolfert van Bijler , a jeweler and diamond merchant . At the time , the gem trade was a prosperous enterprise to join , being a well @-@ developed craft . In those days , the diamond trade was nearly always combined with the trade in pearls , other articles of luxury , and rarities of every description . Dutch jewelers found a ready market for their valuable wares at the Dutch imperial court and the smaller German courts . This realm of work promoted van Rensselaer to a life of economic success .

Much of van Rensselaer 's early life is unknown to today 's historians , though in March 1608 it has been recorded that he was taking care of some business of van Bijler in Prague . It seems van Bijler gradually retired from his business , leaving it in the control of van Rensselaer . During his tenure at the helm of his uncle 's business , van Rensselaer proposed a merger with the firm of Jan van Wely , son of one of van Bijler 's sisters , who had an equally successful jewelry business . The firms combined under the name of Jan van Wely & Co. in February 1614 . Van Rensselaer 's name was not included in the name of the new company , since he contributed only one eighth of the investment capital , whereas van Wely contributed half (192 @,@ 000 guilders) . In 1616 , van Wely was called on by Prince Maurice to meet at the Hague for a sale in jewels . He was murdered while waiting to meet with the Prince . The firm 's contract stipulated that at the death of Jan van Wely , the remaining members of the firm should continue the partnership for another six years . Van Wely 's murder , therefore , caused no change in the business , but it seems that at the

expiration of that time , van Rensselaer began again on his own account , founding Kiliaen van Rensselaer & Co. with partner Jacques l 'Hermite .

= = Director of the Dutch West India Company = =

Some of van Rensselaer 's success as a jewel merchant came about due to trade made possible by the Dutch East India Company . The practical spirit of the Dutch merchant could not fail to recognize that the way to riches was through trade with the West Indies and Africa . During the Twelve Years ' Truce , Dutch merchants had sailed unmolested to the West Indies but also received no letters of marque to take prizes from the enemy .

Before the Eighty Years ' War began , people realized that the West Indies trade might bring great prosperity to the country and that more power might be developed against Spain . Rather than travel to the area singly on an armed ship or in the company of a few other vessels , traders could do business in the manner of the large and prosperous East India Company . A company for carrying on commerce in the West Indies and Africa could be organized , which might , like the sister company , act as the war @-@ waging power in those parts and be supported by the treasury , ships , and troops of the United Netherlands .

After long years of preparation , the Charter of the Dutch West India Company was granted by the States General on June 3 , 1621 , and the subscription list was opened . It is known that subscriptions did not come in very rapidly at first due to the exclusion of the salt trade from the charter . This barrier was overcome in a later amendment to the Charter , and the subscription rate increased .

With a capital of seven million florins , the West India Company was granted exclusive authority and trade privileges in the Dutch possessions of the two Americas , as well as the coast of Africa from the Tropic of Cancer to the Cape of Good Hope . The objects of its creation were to establish an efficient and aggressive Atlantic maritime power in the struggle with Spain , as well as to colonize , develop , and rule the Dutch American dependencies ? particularly New Netherland (the modern states of New York and New Jersey) , discovered by Henry Hudson in 1609 .

Van Rensselaer was one of the first subscribers to the West India Company . As with the other subscribers , he contributed 6000 guilders to be a member of one of its chambers . Having paid his way , he was welcomed to the Chamber of Amsterdam , one of five Chambers of the West India Company , each located in a principal Dutch city . The Chamber of Amsterdam was the largest with twenty members , mainly due to the city 's population , and represented four ninths of the management of the West India Company .

Due to the practical limitations of meetings with 74 members on a regular basis (the total number of members from the five Chambers) , the Charter called for a board of directors comprising nineteen members of the five Chambers . Van Rensselaer was chosen a member of this College of XIX , as it was called . It is said that care was exercised in the selection of the directors of each chamber , and only men of wealth and the highest known integrity were eligible for the trust . Van Rensselaer was apparently known as an unusually clear @-@ headed man and an able and practical merchant who did not limit himself to his own branch of trade . These qualities presumably garnered the trust needed to be elected to the College of XIX .

In its role supporting colonization of New Netherland , the West India Company had an executive board of nine members from the College of XIX to manage the concerns of their colony . Van Rensselaer was also a member of this group . In the early career of the Company , van Rensselaer was one of its mainstays , placing several of his vessels at its disposal and twice advancing money to save its credit . His name is conspicuously identified with all its measures of policy , including the original settlement of Manhattan Island , New Amsterdam .

= = Patroon = =

Unfortunately for the West India Company , the infant colony of New Netherland languished , the cautious Dutch people having very little inclination to emigrate to wild and uncultivated lands in

which no substantial inducements were present . While the economic situation of the colony in the late 1620s could be considered a relatively good showing for a colony only newly started in a wilderness , its slow success was hardly sufficient to create much excitement among the directors of the West India Company . Within a few years , the Company realized that special measures which would afford a stimulus to colonization were indispensable .

It was for these reasons that the Company proposed the Charter of Freedoms and Exemptions , which the States General ratified on June 7 , 1629 . This document was created to encourage settlement of New Netherland through the establishment of feudal patroonships purchased and supplied by members of the West India Company . With a total of 31 articles , the document spells out many requirements of these patroons , primarily stating that each patroon was required to purchase the land from the local Indians , and inhabit the land with 50 adults within four years , with at least one quarter arriving within one year . In return , the patroons were able to own the land and pass it to succeeding generations as a perpetual fiefdom , as well as receive protection and free African slaves from the Company .

It is believed that the system of patroonships was originally suggested by van Rensselaer himself . He was reportedly one of the first of the Company to perceive that the building up of New Netherland could not be carried on without labor , and that labor could not be procured without permanent settlers . " Open up the country with agriculture : that must be our first step , " was his urgent advice . The Company was not inclined to involve itself in further expense for colonization , and matters threatened to come to a halt , when someone ? very likely van Rensselaer himself ? evolved the plan of granting large estates to men willing to pay the cost of settling and operating them .

Van Rensselaer was quick to take part in the new endeavor : on January 13 , 1629 , he sent notification to the Directors of the Company that he , in conjunction with fellow Company members Samuel Godyn and Samuel Blommaert , had sent Gillis Houset and Jacob Jansz Cuyper to determine satisfactory locations for settlement . This took place even before the Charter was ratified , but was done in accordance with a draft of the Charter from March 28 , 1628 .

The report of the agents sent out had not been unfavorable . They had selected an extensive domain on both sides of the North River in the vicinity of Fort Orange for van Rensselaer , which extended 24 miles (39 km) in length , 40 miles (64 km) in breadth and covered an area of almost 1 @, @ 000 square miles (2 @, @ 600 km²) . The location relative to the fort was chosen with care ? in case of danger , it would be a sure point of defense or retreat , and its garrison would be very likely to intimidate the natives . In this manner van Rensselaer employed the troops of the Company more or less as coadjutors to his colonizing plans . Furthermore , the fort would become an easily reached marketplace for the colonists , where they could maintain communication with the outside world . For that reason , van Rensselaer diligently maintained friendly relations with the commander of the garrison and the authorities within the walls .

His first act was to obtain possession of the land for his colony from the Mohican , the original owners , who had never been willing to sell their territory ? not even the ground of Fort Orange . However , after they had been involved in a bloody war with their neighbors , the Mohawks , and were defeated in 1629 , they were found ready to dispose of their possessions . In April , two officers of the West India Company in Fort Orange , Sebastiaen Jansen Krol and Dirk Cornelisz Duyster , specially empowered by writing of January 12 , 1630 , purchased a large tract of land on the west side of the North River . Gillis Houset , one of the men initially sent to determine a settlement location , increased this territory in August by adding tracts of land on the right bank , located above and below Fort Orange , and also by adding land on the east side of the river . After the initial expansion , the territory was later further extended by deeds of purchase in May 1631 and April 1637 .

The most troubling aspect of colonizing the patroonships was enlisting the required number of colonists , so that the failure of many of the other proposed patroonships may in part be attributed to this fact . The patroons still dealt with the issues of a cautious people not caring to venture to an undeveloped world . As an owner of extensive lands in the sandy Gooi and of family estates in the not much more fruitful Veluwe , where several relatives were landowners and struggled to subsist on

meager means , van Rensselaer had an advantage ? his agents needed to employ little persuasion to induce some Gooiers and Veluwers to migrate to more fruitful regions where the farming would be less difficult . In addition , he could depend on the indirect support of his nephew Wouter van Twiller , who had been appointed Director of New Netherland in 1632 , and with whom he engaged in friendly correspondence at a time when Dutch directors opposed the patroons in every way . In 1634 he collaborated with Michael Reyniersz Pauw , the patroon of Pavonia on shipping cattle .

With that , van Rensselaer shipped out 37 immigrants on his ship Rensselaerswijck from Amsterdam on September 26 , 1636 . The vessel arrived on April 7 , 1637 . The population rose to more than 100 by 1642 and doubled that in the next ten years . The village of Beverwyck alone had more than 1000 inhabitants by 1660 and is said to have become urban by this point .

The good understanding between the patroons of the Amsterdam Chamber left nothing to be desired ; Burgh , Godyn , Blommaert , and van Rensselaer , before signifying to the directors their willingness to start colonies , made an agreement to work the projected colonies on joint account , each under the direction of one of them . Three of them would have a one @-@ fifth share in each colony , while the fourth would receive the remaining two fifths , taking the responsibility for its management and exercising patroon rights .

Only Rensselaerswyck was a successful patroonship . Van Rensselaer successively purchased Godyn 's share in the patroonship from his heirs , so that van Rensslaer soon became the owner of three fifths . The two other shares remained partly in the hands of Blommaert and partly in the hands of others : Adam Bessels owning Blommaert 's fifth , while Johannes de Laet and Toussaint Muysaert split Burgh 's fifth between them .

Letters saved by the van Rensselaer family show that Kiliaen van Rensselaer never visited his colony in person .

= = Personal life = =

= = = First marriage = = =

Van Rensselaer married his cousin Hillegonda van Bijler , on July 23 , 1616 . As the sole heir of her father Wolfert van Bijler (or Byllaer) , she inherited 12 @,@ 000 guilders . Hillegonda van Bijler was born around 1598 , making her near the age of 18 at the time of her marriage to van Rensselaer . The same year , the young husband purchased a couple of lots on the east side of the recently dug Keizersgracht in Amsterdam , between Marten and Wolven streets , where he built a house .

Van Rensselaer and van Bijler had three children . The first was Hendrick , Kiliaen 's first son , believed to have died in childhood . Johan , their second son , was baptized on September 4 , 1625 . Maria , their last child , was buried on January 4 , 1627 . She died as an infant .

Hillegonda van Bijler is presumed to have died in late December 1626 , since she was buried on January 1 , 1627 , three days before her third child Maria . She was around the age of 28 and the couple had been married less than eleven years .

= = = Second marriage = = =

Van Rensselaer re @-@ married on December 14 , 1627 to Anna van Wely , daughter of van Rensselaer 's former business partner . Van Wely was born around 1601 , making her about 26 at the time of the marriage . The couple had eight children between 1629 and 1639 , four boys and four girls :

Van Wely outlived her husband , having died in Amsterdam in 1670 .

= = Death and legacy = =

Little is known about van Rensselaer 's death , and sources even disagree on the year . Van Rensselaer was interred in the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam . His memorial stone states he was buried

in the church on October 7 , 1643 .

Van Rensselaer 's son Jeremias is the sole ancestor of the entire van Rensselaer family in America , and only because of Kiliaen 's purchase and development of the land in New Netherland . Included in the subsequent family tree is a very powerful and wealthy group of individuals over the course of American history . Within the paternal (van Rensselaer) lineage , the family has produced numerous New York State Assemblymen and Senators , two Lieutenant Governors of New York , and five Congressmen from New York between 1789 and 1842 .

Van Rensselaer is also the source of the names of the town of Rensselaerville , city of Rensselaer , and county of Rensselaer in upstate New York . Additionally , Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy was founded in 1824 by Stephen Van Rensselaer III as the Rensselaer School . It is now a world @-@ renowned technical and engineering school . Notably , at the time of his death , Stephen III was worth about \$ 10 million (about \$ 88 billion in 2007 dollars) and is noted as being the tenth @-@ richest American in history .

Rensselaerswyck continued as a legal entity until the mid @-@ 1840s , having survived Dutch and British colonial times , even being given a special patent by Queen Anne to confirm the patroon 's fiefdom upon British takeover of the area . The end of the manor came with the Anti @-@ Rent War , when many tenants rose against the successors of Stephen Van Rensselaer III (who had died in 1839) , having much influence on the Legislature elections of the time , and eventually intimidating the Van Rensselaer family enough to sell off most of its holdings .

The family records , many of which were translated and published in the Van Rensselaer Bowier Manuscripts , reveal the personality of the man who figures prominently in the history of colonization as the founder of the only successful patroonship that ever existed in New Netherland . But beyond the fact that he managed this patroonship and that he was a merchant and director of the West India Company , practically nothing was known until the organization and translation of the family records in the early 1900s (decade) .