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The Penelope Stout Story: Evolution of a New Netherland Narrative

by Virginie Adane

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IN THE SEVENTEENTH century, when the Dutch ruled New Netherland, a ship sailing from Amsterdam to New Amsterdam got stranded on the shore of present-day Sandy Hook, New Jersey. Aboard the ship were a sick Dutchman and his wife. The ship's crew fled to New Amsterdam, fearing an Indian attack. The sick man could not follow them, and he and his wife were left on the shore to an uncertain fate. As feared, they were attacked by a group of Indians shortly after their arrival. Both were severely mangled, scalped, and left for dead. The man died, but his wife survived. She crawled into a hollow tree to hide and survived on rainwater. After eight days, a party of two Indians who arrived at the beach found the woman and argued with each other over her fate. The younger Indian wanted to put an end to her suffering by killing her. The older one decided to spare her and brought her to their village, where she was cured and adopted by the tribe.

A few weeks or months later, rumor had it in New Amsterdam that a young white woman was living among the Indians, and a party was sent to rescue her. The old Indian offered her a choice: stay among them or go to New Amsterdam. She decided to leave and live among the Europeans in New Amsterdam. Shortly after, she settled in the English village of Gravesend on Long Island, where she married a prominent English settler named Richard Stout. Even after she went to live with the Europeans, she remained on good terms with the old Indian who had saved her life and visited him frequently. A couple of years later, the Stout family and others settled in what is now Middletown, New Jersey. The woman, Penelope, was visited by her old Indian friend, who warned her of an Indian attack on the new village. Penelope alerted her husband. He failed to believe the threat, but she decided to take her children and flee to New Amsterdam for safety. Later that day, Richard Stout came to believe his wife and warned the rest of the village. They prepared for the attack, avoiding the village's destruction. Following this threat, in 1664, they bought the land from the Indians, and Middletown became the first settlement in this region. As for Penelope, she lived happily ever after, gave birth to ten children, died at age 110, and became a local legend.

That is the present-day version of the Penelope Stout story. The narrative, however, had been retold and transformed since the eighteenth century, either by early historians of New Jersey as a founding myth of the colony or by genealogists reconstructing the archaeology of the Stout lineage. Taking the classic pattern of a woman's Indian captivity narrative, the story of Penelope Stout was part of a tale of the origins of that part of America.

Considered at first to be a popular tradition, it gradually became a battlefield between genealogists seeking to prove the accuracy of the story and skeptical historians. There is still a strong distinction between those who dismiss the story as pure fantasy and those who struggle to make it fit into New Netherland's history. Consequently, although Penelope Stout is rather well-known in popular culture, her story has been completely forgotten among academics. This pattern can be traced back to the end of the eighteenth century. My goal here is not to question the authenticity of the story but to analyze its role and function, question what was at stake

when the narrative was brought forth, and document how it evolved through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The material used for this study consists of the literature produced about Penelope Stout over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Chronologically, these works are classified as follows: (1) historical works by antiquarians and historians on New Jersey¹ in which the Penelope Stout story appears as a brief anecdotal section or chapter; (2) from the end of the eighteenth century on, works published by genealogists seeking the origins of the Stout family,² which are usually longer and attempt to produce evidence of the authenticity of the story; and (3) the Penelope Stout story told as a children's tale.³

What does this case study tell us about people's memory of New Netherland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? Through the Penelope Stout story, I intend to show a memory of New Netherland that was maintained through common lore and tradition. Whereas New Netherland's history seemed forgotten until the mid-nineteenth century, the Penelope Stout story appeared as a common, though minor, captivity narrative built in the eighteenth century on a Dutch colonial heritage. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the narrative shifted from being a hazy tale to the object of meticulous and intensive research by genealogists trying to prove its accuracy. Aside from the development of an academic knowledge of colonial Dutch history, the maintaining of this narrative, although gradually dismissed by scholarship, shows the vivacity of popular tradition in the perpetuation of colonial memory.

From an Oral Tradition to a Written Captivity Narrative.

There is no direct or contemporaneous written account of the story. Penelope Stout is said to have died in either 1712 or 1732. The first known written accounts of her story were published in the second half of the eighteenth century, thirty-three to fifty-three years after Penelope's supposed death.⁴ However, we can suspect an oral tradition. Baptist historian Morgan Edwards referred to such a vivid tradition:

The origin of this Baptist family is no less remarkable; for they all sprang from one woman, and she as good as dead; her history is in the mouths of most of her posterity.⁵

A century later, John Stillwell claimed to have grounded part of his version of the story in a direct family transmission:

Thus it was that Mrs. Seabrook passed onward the tales of her childhood. Perhaps the most important of these was the following:

“My grandmother, Helena Huff, told me how her grandfather, John Stout, had felt the wounds of Penelope Stout, and that he blushed like a school boy. She wished the knowledge of the Indian assault transmitted to her posterity and it has been done, for there are but two hands between Penelope and me.”⁶

The oral tradition, as depicted in Stillwell's work, suggests a family social practice, a mother-to-child or grandparent-to-grandchild transmission. It also suggests that the story belonged to an early folklore. The existence of this oral tradition may have justified the presence of the narrative in written, broader works. Indeed, the very mention of the story in Smith's and then in Edwards' and Benedict's accounts suggests that the story was popular beyond family circles.

First published in the mid-eighteenth century, the Penelope Stout story was indeed one of the many captivity narratives popular at that time.⁷ Usually, these narratives told the experiences of individuals of European or African origin who had been captured by American Indians. Some of these narratives were fictitious; some were part of other, larger works, such as Captain John

Smith's narrative of his rescue by Pocahontas or Hannah Dustan's tale in Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*.⁸ This literary genre was aimed at a broad public in the colonial and early federal eras. It dealt with a phenomenon that was frequently thought about by—and touched the imagination and fears of—most people at that time. According to Alden Vaughan and Daniel Richter, between 1675 and 1763, 1,641 New England settlers were captured.⁹ Among the most famous of who were certainly women such as Mary Rowlandson,¹⁰ Eunice Williams from Deerfield, who chose to remain with her captors,¹¹ and Hannah Dustan, who scalped and killed her captors before returning to her village.¹² The Indian captivity narrative served as an occasion to convey religious, political, or moral values.

The Ambivalent Image of Indians and the First Encounter.

The function of the Penelope Stout narrative and the moral values attached to Indians reveal the status of first encounters. First published after the French and Indian War when the fear of Indian captivity was especially vivid, the story yet conveys a most ambivalent attitude toward Indians.¹³ Indeed, the character of the old Indian as a protective and fatherly figure to Penelope balances out the barbaric image left by the violence inflicted on her. Actually, the very graphic nature of Penelope's wounds belongs to nineteenth-century tradition. In Mrs. Seabrook's supposed testimony, the role of this tradition appears clearly as moral edification for the younger generation.¹⁴ The stress put on Penelope's wounds, so bad that her grandson was said to have blushed like a young boy, was meant to turn the Indians into dreaded enemies. This was, however, a nineteenth-century addition to the narrative. In these later versions, the depiction of Penelope's wounds was indeed graphic; she was said to have been disemboweled and half scalped and to have then grabbed her bowels to crawl into a hollow tree for shelter. Besides, the Indians did attack the first settlers twice and appeared as obstacles to New Jersey settlement. This cruelty was then meant to enhance the bravery of the heroine.

The earliest accounts of the story, however, were more articulate about her rescue and her ongoing friendship with the Indian tribe. As it is, Samuel Smith provided little information on the violence toward Penelope and gave more details on her rescue, stressing the circumstances of her rescue by two Indians. Indeed, after being left for dead and crawling into a hollow tree where she survived for eight days, Penelope encountered two Indians, a young one and an elder one:

having remained in this manner for some time, an old Indian and a young one coming down to the beach found her; they were soon in high words, which she afterwards understood was a dispute; the former being for keeping her alive, the other for dispatching: After they had debated the point a while, the first hastily took her up, and tossing her upon his shoulder, carried her to a place near Middletown now stands, where he dressed her wounds and soon cured her.¹⁵

This situation, with one Indian nearly killing her and another one interfering and arguing over sparing her life, reveals the ambivalent image of Indians in the narrative. Another feature is the ongoing friendship between Penelope and the old Indian, who warned her of an Indian attack to protect her and her family. The older Indian thus appeared from the start as a protective figure. The Indians in this story are, therefore, more ambiguous than in most captivity narratives, since they do not appear only as antagonists. This version of the story would be more or less maintained throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although Smith wrote at a time when anti-Indian feelings were strong, and whereas most captivity narratives in the eighteenth century tended to depict the Indians as ruthless and cruel, this story offered a more ambivalent vision of the cultural encounter.

Was it linked to a tradition depicting Dutch-Indian relations as more peaceful than English-Indian relations? This could be relevant if the narrative had been set in the Upper Hudson Valley, where relations with the Iroquois nations, and more specifically with the Mohawks, were considered more diplomatic than elsewhere.¹⁶ But in the area of present-day Sandy Hook, relations with the Munsee-speaking Indians were far more problematic and had been stained by several violent episodes in the 1640s and 1660s.¹⁷

Should this ambivalent image be understood as a narrative function justifying the first settlement in this area? In the first accounts, the mixed attitudes of the Indians toward Europeans help explain the settlement in the area. Indeed, the old Indian's aid to the woman and their ongoing friendship accounts for the first settlement on the tip of Sandy Hook. Later, the planned attack and the old Indian's warning help us understand the first land treaty between European settlers and Indians shortly before a charter was granted by the Duke of York to Carteret and Berkeley for New Jersey. In that respect, this tale is one of first encounter, of the help brought by Indians to European settlers, and of the first settlements and acts as a justification for colonization.

A Tale of the Origins?

The fact that the narrative first appeared in historical writings reveals its primary function. Be it as part of a history of New Jersey or part of a history of the Baptist denomination in America, the narrative operated as an introductory first encounter tale. It showed a cultural encounter between Native Americans and Europeans that would lead to the first settlement in present-day New Jersey. Besides, Penelope's important offspring would become an important part of the American population. The objective of the story was to inspire pride in the descendants of Penelope Stout, who appeared in all accounts as an exemplary heroic woman and a loyal spouse. The evolution of her gendered role appeared as the definition of a new feminine identity through contact with the New World.

Indeed, in most accounts, the story stuck to these features. Penelope came to New Netherland as a wife and was first represented as not willing to abandon her husband to a certain death. When he was slaughtered, she was alone in a foreign land, being symbolically and physically mutilated. Although she was adopted into the Indian tribe, captivity did not seem to have affected her when she went to live among the Europeans. The story stressed what happened after Penelope was back among European people. At the end of the narrative, when her old Indian friend warned her of an attack, she appeared to be an independent woman, facing her husband, acting against his will, and even influencing him. Although Richard Stout did not believe there was an upcoming attack, Penelope took it upon herself to leave Middletown with her children, leaving her husband behind. Seeing her determination, he came to believe her and warned the villagers of an impending attack. In this context, Penelope became a survivor, her fortitude being shown as exemplary and accounting for a large part of the population of New Jersey. According to June Namias, captivity stories "helped the Euro-American culture struggle through questions of cultural and gender identity during periods of extreme change and uncertainty."¹⁸ In this respect, Penelope became an exemplary figure of the attitude a woman should adopt when confronted by harsh circumstances. This moral function can account for the perpetuation of the narrative and its appeal to diverse audiences.

During the nineteenth century, as numerous other captivity narratives were published in local and regional histories of Eastern towns and states, the Penelope Stout story was perceived as a moral tale of origins. The objective was to inspire patriotism and pride and illustrate frontier heroism. These stories were widely told in children's literature and incorporated into a rapidly growing body of folklore. Franck Stockton dedicated a chapter to the story in his *Stories of New*

Jersey.¹⁹ His point in telling it was to show the complexity of relations with Indians. In Stockton's account, the lesson to be learned was one of mutual understanding. Penelope appeared as a cultural broker between settlers and Indians.

Gary Ebersole argues that the changing religious and moral values in captivity narratives reveal more about the shifting attitudes of the authors and readers of these narratives and the evolution of stereotypes toward Indians and women than they do about the facts and the actual experiences of Native Americans and their captives.²⁰

The story does not tell much about the colonial experience of New Netherland settlers and even less about the memory of the Dutch colony by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One of the most peculiar aspects about the Penelope Stout story, however, is that the people who believed her story to be true—most of her supposed offspring—tried to prove their assertion through genealogical and historical research, thus connecting the captivity narrative to the Dutch colonial past.

A Founding Mother: Penelope Stout and Genealogy.

Whereas the Penelope Stout story was a mere anecdote in the eighteenth century, it gained in consistency and gathered interest in the last decades of that century and in the next. This is related to the development of genealogy and antiquarianism in America, as part of the attention Americans paid to their past. The narrative was, therefore, reworked. The woman was named and identified, sources were found—and sometimes made up—to confirm the story, and the timeline of the story was altered to make it fit into the general history of New Netherland.²¹ These developments show a shifting attitude toward the narrative's relation to the colonial past because the people telling the story were genealogists and local historians trying to illustrate its accuracy. Such attempts induced more methodical research and a better knowledge of the colonial past.

During the eighteenth century, the first written mention of the story was made by Samuel Smith in a historical account of New Jersey.²² Building on oral tradition, the story appeared as a brief anecdote relating to the Dutch period of New Jersey. It belonged to a dimension of mythmaking about the Dutch colonial past where it was disembodied and rather vague, while the English period was more detailed. The paucity of details in Smith's account indicated that he did not place much value on the story. No dates were given, and the only name was that of the Stout family. As it appeared, the story was merely a parable or tale of first European/Indian encounters.

From a tale that was mere anecdote, it grew more important by the end of the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century. The second known mention of Penelope Stout appeared in histories of Baptists in New Jersey, first in minister and historian Morgan Edwards' 1792 publication *Materials towards a History of the Baptists in Jersey*. His article, "History of the Stouts," was published, in a slightly variant form, in David Benedict's *History of the Baptist Denomination in America*.²³ The insertion of the narrative in a religious context accounts for its moral value of edification. Indeed, the woman's fortitude was attributed to her faith in God. In Benedict's book, the woman's origins and name appeared for the first time. She was introduced as "Penelope Vanprincis," a Dutch woman sailing from Amsterdam to New Amsterdam. In this case, her story was worth telling as the origin of one of the most prominent Baptist families of the country. The development of the story, with the addition of many details, coincided with the development of genealogical research combined with the development of local history.

The family of the Stouts are so remarkable, for their number, origin, and character, in both church and state, that their history deserves to be conspicuously recorded; . . . The origin of this Baptist family is no less remarkable; for they all sprang from one woman, and she as good as dead

Although genealogical practices can be traced back to the seventeenth century, the development of genealogy as a methodical object of research dates from the nineteenth century.²⁴ Before the Revolutionary War, the memory of family was perpetuated largely through oral transmission, as seems to have been the case with Penelope Stout's story. Over the first half of the nineteenth century, credit given for the story shifted from popular tradition to a careful genealogical discovery of the Stout family's origins. As Benedict's work shows, Penelope Stout appeared as one of the first American mothers to genealogists and local historians.²⁵ Not only was she the first one who settled on the Jersey shore, thus informing the history of the area, she also appeared as a biological ancestor. She was said to have had ten children with Richard Stout. At the time of her death at 110, she would have had over 500 descendants. But instead of this being simply a symbolic statement, making Penelope the founding mother of the population of the colony, her offspring were carefully documented. Nathan Stout ended his account by reconstructing the Stout lineage, up to and including him:

They had together seven sons and three daughters, viz: John, Richard, Jonathan, Peter, James, Benjamin, David. The daughters were Deliverance [Alice], Sarah, Penelope [Mary]. All of which sons and daughters lived to raise large families. . . . I now close this history, which I began in the seventy-third year of my age. I have ended it in the seventy-fifth and my name is Nathan Stout, the fifth son of John Stout, who was the first son of James Stout, who was the first son of David Stout, who was the seventh son of Richard.²⁶

In most works, the Penelope Stout story was the starting point of a family tree. As a result, an important population was able to claim Penelope as an ancestor, making her a founding mother of New Jersey and other colonies. In this respect, the destiny of Penelope Stout by the end of the eighteenth century echoes that of Pocahontas. Indeed, the focus on the marriage of Pocahontas with John Rolfe played an important role as an identity element among Virginians, and part of them was assuming that their ancestor was Thomas Rolfe, the son of John Rolfe and Pocahontas, making them the first "real" Virginians.²⁷ The comparison cannot go further, since the cultural encounter between Penelope and the old Indian remained a chaste friendship, whereas Pocahontas's story was also one of miscegenation. In Penelope's case, the lineage was Anglo-Dutch, and in some versions purely English. This aristocratic attitude toward origins was deprecated after the Revolutionary War. Indeed, these pretensions seemed to be against the moral values of the new Republic. As Francois Weil puts it, "many in the first generation of Americans questioned the compatibility of genealogy and republicanism. They feared that the practice of genealogy would endanger the nation's collective identity."²⁸

Still, through the nineteenth century, genealogy evolved to become one of several manifestations of a public desire to uncover the history of the new nation. The success of Penelope Stout's story was part of this desire for origins. This "retrospective mood" was not the only reason for this quest for heritage.²⁹ Some saw it as a fancy pastime, some tried to fill out the history of their community, and others turned to it to reaffirm the purity of their Anglo-Saxon origins in a context of intensive immigration from Western Europe. The main turning point in a change of attitude toward genealogy can be traced back to the 1840s and, more specifically, to the work of John Farmer, who, along with fellow antiquarians, helped redefine the meaning of historical time for Americans.³⁰ In New York, a vivid interest in the Dutch origins of elite New Yorkers resulted in the founding of societies, such as the Saint Nicholas

Society, the New England Society in the City of New York, and The Holland Society in the second half of the nineteenth century.³¹

The interest in Penelope Stout as an ancestor, however, can be traced back to an earlier period. The first actual genealogical account was written in the early 1820s by Nathan Stout. In his work, the Penelope Stout story was part of an account of the Stout lineage and came second after an account of Richard Stout's social origins.³² His account differed from that of Smith and Benedict in some details and focused on the first part of the story. The most important difference was that he situated the story in a later timeline than his predecessors (in the 1640s), thus unveiling the existence of many inconsistencies in the story.³³

Over the course of the century, the interest by genealogists in facts evolved into an increased attention paid to documents and historical evidence. Family tradition, considered a mixture of fact and fancy communicated orally through generations, was dismissed in favor of documented genealogies that accounted for the family's past.³⁴ This change in attitude was in reaction to the growing gap between historians and genealogists, as the former did not take the latter seriously. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, Penelope Stout was not discarded as a pure oral fancy. Only Franklin Ellis in his *History of Monmouth County* considered it to be a "romance," while, to the contrary, most genealogists and antiquarians tried to make her story fit into their new attitude toward history.³⁵ Antiquarians and genealogists returned to the origins of the story, on the one hand, and the nature of the events described, looking for historical proofs of her existence, on the other hand.

A Complex Relation to the Dutch Colonial Past.

Local historians continued to mention Penelope Stout's story in histories of New Jersey and Monmouth County, mainly reprinting verbatim Smith's account.³⁶ As the story gained credence among genealogists, Penelope became an object of intensive research during the nineteenth century in order to prove its accuracy. Instead of rejecting the improbable account, many Americans who claimed Penelope as an ancestress looked for proof attesting to her existence. In this manner, they attempted to make her story fit into the history of New Netherland. The consequence of this tendency toward documentation was the unveiling of inaccuracies in the story and the search for proof of the existence of this now mythical ancestor. Actually, most of the details of the story were added in the nineteenth century, starting with the identification of Penelope Prince/van Princis as the main character.

Whereas in Smith's account the woman remained anonymous, she was quickly named afterwards. By the end of the eighteenth century, Benedict in his work referred to her as "Penelope Vanprincis." His sources remain obscure, and the name "Vanprincis" seems highly doubtful, according to Dutch naming practices—indeed "van" is usually adjoined to a toponym. Had she been called "Penelope van Princen," her name would have sounded more realistic. Thereafter, a "Pennellopey Prince" was found in the records of Gravesend, Long Island.³⁷ It became possible to attest to the existence of a Penelope Prince and to attest of the major lines of Richard Stout's life in the colony (his presence Gravesend, in Middletown, his offspring), but there was nothing on the Sandy Hook events. Finally, at the very end of the century, when confronted by the lack of documentation, John Stillwell produced an oral testimony supposedly authenticating the existence of Penelope's wounds, and at the same time, giving to folklore the status of a historical source.³⁸

In Smith's account, the timeline of the events is hazy, being settled "while New-York was in possession of the Dutch, about the time of the Indian war in New-England," the unidentified

Indian war accounting for the aggressive attitude of the Native populations on Sandy Hook.³⁹ From Benedict's work on, the timeline of the story became more specific. Notwithstanding the lack of documentation, the first genealogical works reported that she was born in 1602 in Amsterdam and died in 1712 in Middletown, New Jersey. Therefore, the events in which she was involved would have taken place around 1620, during her eighteenth year. At this point, Henry Hudson had indeed sailed the river named after him, although the colony was not yet settled. It would be four more years before the Dutch West India Company sent settlers to the colony and another two years before Pieter Minuit purchased Manhattan.⁴⁰ This chronology quite literally turned Penelope into one of the very first settlers of the colony. As genealogical and historiographical practices evolved, fitting Penelope into New Netherland's history became more difficult. The inconsistencies between the story and New Netherland chronology soon struck antiquarians and genealogists, who tried to resolve contradictory accounts, as Thomas Hale Streets' survey shows at the end of the century.⁴¹ Streets attempted to make the story fit into New Netherland history: "I have been at considerable pains in verifying the legend by official contemporary documents and by local history, and find that it agrees more with facts than is usually the case with family traditions."⁴² He consequently identified a mistake of twenty years in the overall story. Penelope was, therefore, born in 1622, and sailed to New Amsterdam around 1640, when her ship got stranded on present-day Sandy Hook at the time of the Pequot War (1634-1638) in New England. This also coincided with Willem Kieft's war (1643-1645), and the final aggression could be linked with the second Esopus War in the early 1660s. His corrections, based on the chronology of New Netherland, on the one hand, and on the genealogical chronology of the Stout family, on the other hand, show an increased knowledge of New Netherland and the evolution of the status of the story from a symbolic parable to an actual cornerstone for the documentation of the family's history.

The work of these genealogists gave more substance to the story. Yet, New Netherland never looked more Anglo- American. Although the story was set in New Netherland and had Dutch protagonists, it actually belonged to an English colonial world more than to a Dutch one. For instance, when it came to the history of the Dutch colony, the chronology remained vague, if not erroneous, the only reference point being an Anglo-Indian war in New England and not those in New Netherland. Besides, the nineteenth-century attempts at "correcting" the narrative led to stressing the English elements of the colony's history:

- The nationality of Penelope remained problematic. In Smith's account, she was allegedly Dutch, as being the wife of a "Dutchman" and sailing from Amsterdam. However, in the nineteenth century, she became gradually referred to as "Penelope Prince," an English woman whose father had fled to Amsterdam for religious motives, thus complicating the social relations in the colony.
- Part of the story was set in Gravesend, the most important English settlement in Dutch Long Island, thus echoing to the multiethnicity of the Dutch colony. In this way, she was linked to Lady Deborah Moody, one of the most powerful women in the colony. Lady Moody was an Anabaptist dissident banished from New England who sought refuge in New Netherland. There she settled on the southern tip of Long Island and was granted a land patent by Willem Kieft in 1645.⁴³ Among Lady Moody's allies was an Englishman named Richard Stout, whose life is fairly well documented. With the development of genealogical research, the accent was put on the lineage, thus making Richard Stout a prominent figure in the story.
- Finally, whereas Middletown was introduced as a Dutch settlement in the first accounts, it gradually became an English settlement.

Although the story took place in the Dutch colony, under Willem Kieft's government, and is supposedly relating its origins, Dutch America is almost missing. This observation is all the more surprising, considering the progressive rediscovery of New York's Dutch colonial past throughout the nineteenth century.

In the eighteenth century, and even at the beginning of the nineteenth, New Netherland history seemed to be forgotten. In an article dedicated to visual representations of New Netherland, Annette Stott points to a complete loss of any visual reminder of the Dutch presence in the nineteenth century, thus paving the way for the invention of the Dutch tradition.⁴⁴ In 1828, J. F. Watson noted that only five Dutch buildings had survived in New York City, and all dated back to the English period and were built after 1689.⁴⁵ Another interesting fact is that New Netherland was only given one chapter in Bancroft's history of the United States, due to a lack of information.⁴⁶

At the beginning of the century, the interest in New Netherland belonged mostly to Hudson Valley folklore. Washington Irving used this folklore to write his *History of New York* in 1809.⁴⁷ Starting with Irving's satirical History, using comical means, during the nineteenth century, New Netherland gradually became an object of careful research dissociated from folklore. Historians looked for new sources of information to interpret New Netherland history. By mid-century, a newly-developed interest in documenting the Dutch period arose. The works of John Romeyn Brodhead, working for the New-York Historical Society, Edmund B. O'Callaghan, and David Valentine contributed to a better understanding of the period.⁴⁸ They collected documentation in Europe, translated source materials to make them accessible to a larger public, and published the first scholarly histories of New Netherland. Yet, this archival work, mostly undertaken by the New-York Historical Society, was built on the knowledge of Dutch language and remained confined to a selective group of scholars.

New Netherland history developed with absolutely no idea that a half-scalped woman was considered the origin of the first settlement in present-day New Jersey at the time of Petrus Stuyvesant. The evolution of the narrative and its connection to New Netherland's history demonstrates the growing gap between folklore and historical research in the nineteenth century. As Robert Taylor and Ralph Crandall put it, "more often than not the historian assumed the [that?] genealogy was an amateurish avocation coveted by enthusiasts too engrossed in chasing down a famous relative to be nonsubjective, and too unversed in rigorous proof methods to avoid sloppy work."⁴⁹ The Penelope Stout narrative was one of the folkloric tales that became progressively dismissed from the historical account. However, it was also part of this trend that led genealogists to connect the narrative to the history of New Netherland. Over time, Penelope Stout went from being a hazy folk tale loosely related to New Netherland to being either a genealogical figure for a confident public of elderly erudite gentlemen or a Dutch traditional figure in folklore. In either case, the authors of the story insisted on careful documentation and the value of archival material to assert the veracity of their account.

The Anglicization of the narrative at a time when New Netherland's history became better documented might seem inconsistent with the rediscovery of Dutch America. Aside from these scholarly endeavors, however, traditional folklore remained vivid throughout the century. There was a crowd of amateur genealogists and antiquarians that borrowed from scholarship, oral traditions, and written works to build a narrative of the past that would fill their patriotic need for identity.⁵⁰ The goal of the genealogists and folkloric authors telling a story such as Penelope Stout's was not necessarily the same as that of the New-York Historical Society. In the end, the English features of the narrative tend to turn the colony into an Anglo-Dutch world and to emphasize the similitude between the Dutch colony and its English neighbors. The

evolution of the Penelope Stout narrative into an overall Anglo-Dutch narrative shows the gradual insertion of the Dutch colonial past into an Anglo-American world in popular tradition. The quest for a strictly Dutch identity actually came later in the century, and “Holland Mania” was a bigger phenomenon at the turn of the twentieth century.

In the end, what Penelope Stout’s story reveals is that the rediscovery of the Dutch colonial past is not only the result of scholars and archivists but is also carried through tradition and folklore. Through the anecdotal captivity narrative of eighteenth-century antiquarian works, an oral tradition was preserved, passed down from parents to children. At first a moral tale, the story became a historical cornerstone for genealogists and antiquarians in search of identity. This transition shows the adaptation of tradition to the evolution of knowledge and uses of the Dutch colonial past. As the narrative became more specific, it became more integrated into an Anglo-American folklore and simultaneously more disconnected from “official” New Netherland history. Still, memory of the Dutch period, however imperfect and inconsistent, however Anglicized and melded into a more global Anglo-American tradition, remains vivid through traditional popular stories, such as the Penelope Stout narrative.

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Notes

¹ The first to mention Penelope Stout was Samuel Smith, *History of the Colony of Nova Cæsaria, or New Jersey* (Burlington, NJ, 1765). The earliest works date from the end of the eighteenth century: Morgan Edwards, *Materials towards a History of the Baptists in Jersey* (Philadelphia, 1792); David Benedict, *History of the Baptist Denomination in America* (London, 1813); John O. Raum, *The History of New Jersey* (Philadelphia, 1877); Andrew Mellick, *The Story of an Old Farm Life in New Jersey in the Eighteenth Century* (Sommerville, NJ, 1889); Edwin Salter, *Salter’s History of Monmouth and Ocean Counties New Jersey, Embracing a Genealogical Record of Earliest Settlers in Monmouth and Ocean Counties and Their Descendants* (Bayonne, NJ, 1890); Franklin Ellis, *History of Monmouth County, New Jersey* (Philadelphia, 1885).

² Nathan Stout, *A Small Genealogical Account of the family called Stout (1821-1823)*; Thomas Hale Streets, *The Story of Penelope Stout: As Verified by the Events of History and Official Records* (Philadelphia, 1897); Thomas Hale Streets, *The Stout Family of Delaware; With the Story of Penelope Stout* (Philadelphia, 1913).

³ Franck R. Stockton, *Stories of New Jersey* (New York, 1896, repr. New Brunswick, 1961), 57-68.

⁴ Smith, *History of the Colony of Nova Cæsaria*; Edwards, *History of the Baptists in Jersey*.

⁵ Edwards, *ibid.*

⁶ John E. Stillwell, *Historical and Genealogical Miscellany, Data Relating to the Settlement and Settlers of New York and New Jersey*, 5 vols. (New York, 1903-1932), 1: 290.

⁷ Kathryn Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900* (New York, 1993); Gary L. Ebersole, *Captured By Texts: Puritan to Postmodern Images of Indian Captivity* (Chalottesville, Va., 1995); June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill, 1993).

⁸ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana. The Ecclesiastical History of New England* (London, 1702).

⁹ Alden T. Vaughan and Daniel K. Richter, “Crossing the Cultural Divide, 1620-1763,” in Alden T. Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism. Essays on the Colonial Experience* (Oxford/New York, 1995), 213-53.

¹⁰ Mary Rowlandson, *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (London, 1682).

¹¹ Rev. John Williams, *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion* (Boston, 1707). See also: John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive. A Family Story from Early America* (New York, 1995), and Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, *Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield* (Boston, 2003).

¹² Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*.

¹³ See, for example, Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*.

¹⁴ Stillwell, *Historical and Genealogical Miscellany*

¹⁵ Smith, *History of the Colony of Nova Cæsaria*.

- 16 Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: the Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill, 1992); Charles T. Gehring and William Starna, trans. and eds., *A Journey into Mohawk and Oneida Country, 1634-1635. The Journal of Harmen Meynderts van den Bogaert* (Syracuse, NY, 1988).
- 17 Evan Haefeli, "Kieft's War and the Cultures of Violence in Colonial America," in Michael A. Bellesiles, *Lethal Imagination: Violence and Brutality in American History* (New York/London, 1999), 17-42; William Starna, "American Indian Villages to Dutch Farms. The Settling of Settled Lands in the Hudson Valley," in Roger Panetta, ed., *Dutch New York. The Roots of Hudson Valley Culture* (Yonkers, 2009): 73-93.
- 18 Namias.
- 19 Stockton.
- 20 Ebersole.
- 21 William Montgomery Clemens reports the following marriage minute: "Stout, Richard and Penelope Kent or Lent (widow of Von Printzen), 1634-5, Gravesend, Long Island, New York." The charter of Gravesend being issued in 1645, the record appears to be made up, adding a supposed difficulty in deciphering to make it plausible. Source: William Montgomery Clemens, *American Marriages before 1699* (1926).
- 22 Smith.
- 23 Edwards. Benedict, Volume 1, 573-74.
- 24 Robert M. Taylor and Ralph J. Crandall, "Historians and Genealogists: an Emerging Community of Interest," in Ralph S. Crandall, ed., *Generations and Change: Genealogical Perspectives in Social History* (Macon, GA, 1986), 3-26.
- 25 By that time, and up until the Civil War, they were often the same people. See Taylor and Crandall.
- 27 Robert S. Tilton, *Pocahontas: The Evolution of an American Narrative* (Cambridge, 1994).
- 26 Nathan Stout.
- 28 Francois Weil, "John Farmer and the Making of American Genealogy," *The New England Quarterly*, 80 (September 2007), 3: 408-34.
- 29 Taylor and Crandall.
- 30 Weil.
- 31 Laura Vookles, "Return in Glory: The Holland Society Visits the 'Fatherland,'" in Panetta, *Dutch New York*, 257-289.
- 32 Stout.
- 33 Middletown, New Jersey, was first settled in 1648 in his account.
- 34 Taylor and Crandall.
- 35 Franklin Ellis, *History of Monmouth County*, New Jersey (Philadelphia, 1885).
- 36 See, for example, Raum; Andrew Mellick.
- 37 In Gravesend, Long Island, Town Book, Vol. 1; September 12, 1648. The minute reads as follows:
"Ambrose London plaintive agt: ye wife of Tho: Aplegate defent in an action of slander for sayeing his wife did milke her Cowe
"The defent saith yt shee said noe otherwise but as Penellopey Prince tould her yt Ambrose his wife did milke her Cowe
"Rodger Scotte being deposed saith yt being in ye house of Tho: Aplegate hee did heare Pennellopey Prince saye yt ye wife of Ambrose London did milke ye Cowe of Tho: Aplegate
"Tho: Greedye being deposed saith yt Pennellope Prince being att his house hee did heare her saye yt shee and Aplegates Daughter must com as witnesses agat: Ambrose his wife for milking Aplegats Cowe
"Pennellope Prince being questioned adknowledge her faulte in soe speaking and being sorrie for her words she spake gave satisfaction one both sides."
- 38 Cf. Stillwell.
- 39 Smith.
- 40 Jaap Jacobs, *New Netherland: A Dutch Colony in Seventeenth-century America* (Leiden, 2004).
- 41 Streets, *The story of Penelope Stout*.
- 42 Streets, *The Stout Family of Delaware*, Preface, p. 3.
- 43 Linda Biemer, *Women and Property in Colonial New York: the Transition from Dutch to English Law (1643-1727)* (Chapel Hill, 1983).
- 44 Annette Stott, "Inventing Memory: Picturing New Netherland in the Nineteenth Century," in Joyce Goodfriend, ed., *Revisiting New Netherland: Perspectives on Early Dutch America* (Leiden, 2005), 13-39; Philip Lopate, "The Days of the Patriarchs: Washington Irving's A History of New York," in Panetta, *Dutch New York*, 191-221.

- ⁴⁵ J. F. Watson, "Olden Time Researches and Reminiscences of New York City," in *Annals of Philadelphia, Being a Collection of Memoirs, Anecdotes and Incidents of the City and Its Inhabitants, from the Days of the Pilgrim founders* (Philadelphia, 1830), quoted in Stott, "Inventing Memory," 13.
- ⁴⁶ George Bancroft, *History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent to the Present Time* (Boston, 1837). See Stott, "Inventing Memory," 23.
- ⁴⁷ Lopate, art. cit.; Washington Irving, *A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*, . . . (New York/Philadelphia, 1809).
- ⁴⁸ David T. Valentine, [William I. Paulding], *History of the City of New York* (New York, 1853).
- ⁴⁹ Taylor and Crandall, 24.
- ⁵⁰ Laura Vookles, "Return in Glory. The Holland Society Visits 'The Fatherland'," in Roger Panetta, ed., *Dutch New York. The Roots of Hudson Valley Culture* (Yonkers, N.Y., 2009), 257-97.