

Chapter XI: VanderPoel-Verplanck-Vigne

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We resume our study of the Vanderpool family with the parents of our Wynant van der Poel (as it was still being spelled at this time). They were **MELGERT¹ WYNANTSE VAN DER POEL** and **ARIAANTJE {VERPLANCK} VAN DER POEL**, who were married on December 4, 1668.² Some Vanderpool family sources say that both Melgert and Ariaantje were born or baptized (Melgert in Fort Orange/Rensselaerswyck) on the same day, December 2, 1646. This date and place cannot be incorrect for Melgert, however, principally because his parents were still living in Amsterdam as late as December 1652. In addition, Melgert had already been born by 1646, for baptismal records in Amsterdam suggest his birth occurred in late 1643: Melgert's parents had two males baptized as Melgerts or Melchert, one in the New Church on August 9, 1641, and another in the Old Church on November 26, 1643.³ The Melgert who married Ariaantje and fathered Wynant was almost certainly the latter child, who, in accordance with the custom then, was given the same name as his recently deceased older brother.

¹ Sometimes this name was spelled Melchert.

² By coincidence, the parents of both Wynant van der Poel and Catharina de Hooges were married on the same date seven years apart: December 4, 1668.

³ Both churches still exist. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Old Church also figures in the Bradt portion of this family history. The New Church (*Nieuw Kerk* in Dutch), technically called St. Catherine's, dates from the 17th century. Still usually called the New Church, it is on the Dam next to City Hall (now the Royal Palace). It is here that the Dutch monarchs are crowned. See slide 05106, taken in 1991. I did not visit this church either, unfortunately.

Before we continue our study of the Vanderpools themselves, though, we will examine the ancestry of Melgert's wife, Ariaantje.⁴ She was very likely born in New Netherland (probably in New Amsterdam itself) rather than in Europe. Her supposed date of birth, December 2, 1646, cannot be confirmed, but everything we know about her parents indicates that they were already in America prior to that year. Those parents, **ABRAHAM ISAACSE VERPLANCK** and **MARIA {VIGNE} VERPLANCK**, are said to have been married in New Amsterdam about 1634, a plausible date.⁵ Abraham was born about 1606 in the Netherlands. Maria was born about 1608 to 1610 in the vicinity of Valenciennes, France, a city known for its fine laces – and for its Huguenots. One source suggests that she was actually born in St. Waast-la-Haut, a town about a dozen miles east of Valenciennes where her father may also have been born. Both Abraham and Maria {Vigne} Verplanck died in Albany, Maria in 1670 or 1671 and Abraham about 1691.⁶

⁴ This name was usually spelled Verplanck (in the court records of New Amsterdam, for instance) but became Ver Planck later on before reverting to Verplanck in the 19th century. The prefix *ver* is a Dutch abbreviation for *vander*, meaning “of” or “from the.” In Dutch, the name means “of the plank,” an allusion whose meaning is not clear. Abraham Verplanck often spelled his name Planck when he was younger, though, and another Verplanck in New Netherland, the patroon's agent Jacob Planck (possibly our Abraham's uncle), always spelled it Planck. I have used Verplanck, except for Jacob. In the Netherlands, the name may have originally been Ver Plancken. The author of a family history featuring Abraham Verplanck mentions a French family with a similar name, but there is no evidence linking Abraham to it.

⁵ Maria's first husband, as we shall see, died in 1632, so 1634 is a prudent estimate for her marriage to Abraham Verplanck. The Verplanck-Vigne marriage shows how the diverse ethnic groups on Manhattan Island (one Dutch and the other French or Belgian) began at once to intermarry. One of the other daughters of Abraham Verplanck and Maria Vigne was an ancestor of Thomas Alva Edison.

⁶ The court minutes of New Amsterdam, in their last definite reference (1672) to either Abraham or Maria, note that she left a will dated August 9, 1670. The index to the volume implies that Abraham was also dead, but although the wording of the document itself uses the phrase “late wife Maria” it does not call Abraham “the late Abraham,” so I think he was still alive when the minutes were written; moreover, these minutes *do* seem to refer to him again in 1674. The court minutes cease soon afterwards, so it is not possible to find a reference to Abraham's death in them. There is also circumstantial evidence supporting 1671 as the approximate date of Maria's death: she was one of the principal heirs of the estate of her stepfather, Jan Damen, and this estate was partitioned up in that year. When it was, Abraham Verplanck

Although we do not know exactly when Abraham Verplanck arrived in New Netherland, our first definite references to him come in 1638 and 1639. A contemporary map, made in the latter year and now in the Library of Congress, shows that he owned a tract of land at Pouwells Hoek in what is today Jersey City and Hoboken, New Jersey, directly across the North (now Hudson) River from New Amsterdam. This strategic property included a place where the Indian trails came together at a customary point for crossing over to Manhattan Island. This area, which included a large portion of the shoreline of New Jersey and also some of Staten Island, had been patented by a man named Pauw – hence its original name of Pavonia and present name of Paulus Hook. Pauw had hoped to become a patroon but did not succeed and so sold his rights to the West India Company, which in turn sold off the land to individuals.⁷

Abraham Verplanck was evidently the first man to take advantage of this opportunity to buy land in Pavonia when he obtained a patent for his property from Director Willem Kieft (Petrus Stuyvesant's predecessor) on May 1, 1638. Abraham and his wife probably lived there for a few years, perhaps until the little settlement was devastated in the fighting between the Indians and the Dutch during the early 1640s that we will discuss below. By 1643 Abraham had begun renting out his land in Pavonia, after which he

became the owner of about one-quarter of the property (along Wall Street) but sold his interests within a few years.

⁷ The center of Pavonia was about where Henderson Street and Fifth Street cross in today's Jersey City, New Jersey. See the USGS map for Jersey City/New Jersey. See slide 09690 for a view of this area in 2000.

mortgaged it and then possibly lost it through foreclosure. He may well have decided that rebuilding after the Indians laid waste to Pavonia was not worth the expense and let the property be taken in order to satisfy his debt.

Soon after 1640, then, Abraham and Maria were living back on Manhattan Island, where both probably had resided in New Netherland before venturing across the river to Pavonia. One place we know they lived, which Abraham apparently obtained by a grant from the West India Company in 1646 (or perhaps in trade for his rights to Pavonia), was a rather small lot immediately adjacent to the five stone houses that served as the Company's business headquarters. This was one of the most desirable locations in New Amsterdam. These houses, a major landmark in the little town, had been built about 1635 some two hundred feet east of the wall of the Dutch fort.⁸ The small lane on which Verplanck's lot and house were located subsequently became, and still is called, Bridge Street, which runs only a block or two. His property lies just to the northeast of what is now Whitehall Street and southwest of what is now Broad Street. The name of the street came from its having a small bridge over New Amsterdam's drainage canal.⁹

⁸ See slides 08833, 08834, and 08836 for views in 1997 of the approximate site of the Dutch fort, which is now covered by the massive U.S. Customs House.

⁹ Abraham Verplanck's property on Bridge Street is approximately equivalent to 25 Pearl Street, which runs parallel to Bridge Street here. See slides 08424-08425, 08427, 08432, 08433 (all taken in 1996), and 08835 (taken in 1997). His property was the site of or near to the residences of some famous later New Yorkers, including Mayor Cornelius Steenwyck and the Morris family. On September 21, 1776, the day British forces took control of New York City after General George Washington and his troops evacuated the city, Bridge Street was in the area engulfed by one of New York City's great fires. An office building constructed in 1961 is now on the site of Abraham Verplanck's house. Some of the old Dutch streets were shifted, even as early as the 17th century but more particularly by the extensive construction in this area during the 20th century as newer and taller buildings and new roadways (to say nothing of subways) were built. Even so, the street plan of this particular part of New York City has remained remarkably similar to what it was three or four centuries ago, and one can still get the sense of the character of the oldest portion

How long Abraham and Maria lived on Bridge Street is not clear (the Company apparently took this property later on in order to create a marketplace), but in 1649 Abraham seems to have purchased other property north on The Strand, which is now known as Pearl Street. This relatively large lot, which fronted on Pearl and went back to higher ground away from the East River, was located in a section of New Amsterdam known as The Ferry or Smith's Vly (Valley).¹⁰ Abraham's property here is now covered by the intersection of Pearl Street and Fulton Street (the latter having been driven through the property to the East River early in the 19th century.)¹¹

In fact, it is sometimes difficult to determine exactly where Abraham did live in New Amsterdam at any particular point in his life. On some lists in the court minutes he seems to have been listed with those residing on or near Bridge Street and in other references others he was clearly shown as a resident of Smith's Valley. He may in addition have spent some of his time living in Albany (where his son Isaac is thought to

of New Amsterdam. See the maps of the area that I found in two histories of New Amsterdam; these maps and other sources show the actual sites of the Verplanck properties and can be matched up with today's maps of the area.

¹⁰ The ferry to Brooklyn already was landing at the foot of Fulton Street at that time and would continue to do so until the Brooklyn Bridge was built nearby two centuries later.

¹¹ See slides 08437, 08438, and 08443 (taken in 1996). In 1665 Verplanck and his brother-in-law, Jan Vigne, were listed in the court minutes as living in Smith's Valley, an area of somewhat lower-lying land that extended along Pearl Street northward from about the location of Maiden Lane – in other words, about where Fulton Street is now. There is quite an irony here, in light of the fact that I did my Ph.D. dissertation on Alfred E. Smith, whose association with Fulton Street and its fish market was legendary. Indeed, Smith lived in several places throughout the area just adjacent to the Verplanck property at Pearl and Fulton, and as a boy he had a paper route that covered a large portion of this entire area. (Smith's Valley was of course not named for Al Smith. Nor was he named for it, although Smith was not his family's original name but one it acquired when it came to America.)

have been born in 1651) or else engaged in trade along the Hudson River or down on the Delaware River, which the Dutch called the South River. His name appears in the records of New Amsterdam from time to time, as when he was assessed a portion of the costs of repairing the fort or when he claimed damages owing to a survey that was made. He was among the forty or so citizens who in 1653 contributed, albeit modestly in his case, to the fund that erected the wall for which Wall Street is named. (The contributions were in actuality loans at 10% interest; there is no record of their having been repaid, so perhaps New York City now owes Verplanck's descendants like us quite a bit of money.)

In 1659, Abraham Verplanck was among the nine householders chosen to hang leather fire buckets (a dozen buckets each) for ready access in case of fire. One book has described this as “the first systematic attempt to create a fire department in New Amsterdam.” In 1664 he was one of ninety-three residents who signed a remonstrance urging Director Stuyvesant to surrender the city to the threatening English forces present in the harbor rather than risk New Amsterdam’s destruction during their imminent assault, and afterwards Abraham was one of 272 persons who swore allegiance to the city’s new English rulers. The next year, however, he – like most other residents – went on record refusing the English governor's request that they billet English troops, a sore point with the conquered Dutch. In 1665 and 1674 Verplanck is identified as living in Smith's Valley, where he apparently remained until his death in 1691. The reference in 1674 tells us that Verplanck (and his brother-in-law, Jan Vigne) were being compensated

for having their properties near the fort confiscated to strengthen its defenses; the government evidently agreed to build him a house in another part of the city instead.

Other references to Abraham Verplanck in the records of New Amsterdam involve disputes with other residents, although on the whole these disputes do not seem any more serious than most of the other ones that appear throughout these records. Abraham Verplanck did show, however, that he could be just as contentious and cantankerous as the other Dutchmen who populate our family. In 1642, for instance, he tore down certain ordinances posted by the council and director (in the days before newspapers and other media, the only way such leaders could communicate their orders and decisions). As a result of this incident, and even more what he *said* afterwards, he was heavily fined.¹²

One source describes Abraham Verplanck as a farmer. On the property he bought, rented, or inherited he probably raised tobacco as did the other farmers of New Amsterdam, who preferred this easily grown and highly profitable cash crop to the agricultural produce the Company had hoped they would grow. His numerous appearances in the court records, however, suggest that like so many others in New Amsterdam Abraham eventually became a trader and perhaps a merchant of some sort: many of the disputes in which he was a party concern commercial transactions stemming from trading activities. His wife Maria was a defendant in at least one case, so perhaps

¹² In one dispute, Verplanck's case was undercut when his adversary got Director Stuyvesant to intervene personally on his behalf.

the whole family was involved in the business. I think the evidence suggests that Abraham Verplanck also speculated in land, probably renting out some of the properties that he had acquired.

This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that in 1646 Abraham and three others (including Jan Vigne) obtained from Director Kieft a sizable grant of land along the west bank of the South (now Delaware) River in what is today Pennsylvania. Kieft was eager to see this area settled by the Dutch in order to prevent the Swedish foothold that had been established further south a decade earlier from being developed into a center that would compete with Dutch traders. The site of Verplanck's grant, on the west side of the Delaware River, originally was opposite to a small island called "The Birds' Sand" and today is about where the Walt Whitman Bridge connects to the Pennsylvania shore of the Delaware River.¹³ In July 1655, Verplanck was one of the 120 men in eleven ships who accompanied Director Stuyvesant in the military expedition Stuyvesant led against the Swedes at their stronghold on the South River, Fort Christiana, which was located near present-day Wilmington, Delaware. After the Swedes surrendered their fort, Verplanck signed as a witness to a secret treaty with the local Indians in which the Dutch acquired the Indians' land rights in that vicinity, and later he claimed some of this land for himself.

¹³ A Juriaen Planck, a trader, is mentioned in the accounts of this affair; it is possible that this Planck and our Abraham were related somehow, but since we do not know anything more about Juriaen Planck we cannot make a judgment about this matter. See the USGS map for Philadelphia/Pennsylvania for the location of Verplanck's grant.

It appears, though, that Abraham Verplanck was not one of the most prosperous and prominent of the burghers of New Amsterdam. In 1657 he was one of 238 persons who qualified for (or were willing to pay cash for) the “small burgher right,” which enabled them to engage in trade and hold minor offices.¹⁴ Only nineteen persons qualified or paid to become Great Burghers, who could hold the higher offices. In addition, Verplanck evidently lost several properties, other than Pavonia, for the debts he owed and mortgaged most or all of his remaining properties, which may indicate that he was in rather straightened financial circumstances during his final years. (Smith's Valley, where Verplanck lived out his life, was by that time a pocket of low-income laborers.) Abraham may also have become enfeebled during his later years, since for the first time he did not sign his name to a document then but only put his mark on it. Ironically, Abraham's children did quite well in life (and married well), and both of his sons sired large families that would become prominent in the later history of New York.¹⁵

¹⁴ Jan Vigne was one of the relatively few (only nineteen persons) who became a Great Burgher.

¹⁵ A descendant, a merchant named Guleyn Verplanck, had a store on Pearl Street between Broad Street and Whitehall Street and a residence on Wall Street near what would become Federal Hall. (See slide 08829, taken in 1997.) Later, Guleyn and his partners got a patent for a large part of what is now Dutchess County, near Fishkill, where he built a manor house that was destroyed by shells from a British ship during the Revolutionary War. Guleyn was a principal in what may have been the first instance of court-ordered child support in New York, and perhaps in the country. Through their land, and the families into which they married, the later Verplancks, many of whom were also merchants, became known as a wealthy Hudson River family. They probably owned slaves, as most of these families did. The Verplancks also gave their name to a point along the Hudson River shoreline and to a town across from Stony Point. Another Verplanck residence (the home of Gulian Verplanck, a prominent Tory), was where the Society of Cincinnati was formed in 1783. A later Gulian Verplanck (1786-1870) was probably the most well-known member of this family. Like several others he was active in politics, and he was elected a member of Congress. In 1834, he was defeated (by only 180 votes out of 35,000 cast) as the Whig candidate for mayor of New York City. He was also a prominent writer on public affairs, literature, law, and other topics and was described in a recent history of the city as the “spokesman” for the Dutch and their traditional culture in New York. There is a Verplanck Room at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City that contains furnishings and paintings from the Verplanck house at 3 Wall Street dating from the time of Samuel Verplanck in the 18th century. These items are contained within part of a non-Verplanck house of comparable date that was transplanted in the museum. One of Abraham Verplanck's grandsons, incidentally, also married a Van der Poel.

Abraham Verplanck may be most vividly remembered today for his involvement in what was probably the most unpleasant episode in the relationship between the Dutch colony and the neighboring Indians. By 1640 expansion of the new settlement had begun to squeeze the Lenapes, from whom the Dutch had obtained their land, as well as other local tribes related to the Lenapes. Director Kieft was pressuring the Indians to pay for their “protection” by the West India Company and its private military force, payments the Indians viewed as a form of extortion. Inevitably there was friction as the Lenapes and other tribes were caught in a vise between the Dutch growth and the more powerful tribes to the north. The culmination of the friction was the so-called Pig War of 1641, when some Raritan Indians were accused of killing marauding swine belonging to settlers in New Amsterdam. Director Kieft evidently decided he would exploit the clash as a way of putting additional pressure on the Indians, and possibly of eliminating them altogether. He assembled a kind of advisory council called “The Twelve” to help him devise and gain support for an aggressive policy toward the Indians.

Abraham Verplanck was among the dozen men the residents of New Amsterdam chose in 1641 to serve as The Twelve. This group at first advised restraint, then agreed to sanction a limited punitive expedition in order to retaliate for the Indians' raids. In return for their willingness to endorse some action against the tribes, though, The Twelve presented Kieft with a petition – the first petition ever drafted in the Dutch colony –

asking that the group become a permanent body with a say in the colony's governance; it also asked for the end of certain restrictions. This was more than Kieft had wanted, so he thanked The Twelve and then proceeded to ignore them.

More clashes in 1642 and 1643 gave Kieft further excuse and opportunity to strike at the Indians. In February 1643, one of Kieft's sympathizers, after plying three members of The Twelve (including Verplanck) with alcohol, persuaded them to sign another petition – which Kieft conveniently had prepared and given to his ally – urging an attack on the Wechquaskeek Indians, who were camped in Pavonia. Kieft used the petition to justify the resulting massacre of more than one hundred Wechquaskeek and Hackensack men, women, and children by West India Company soldiers and armed settlers. One book on the subject has described Abraham Verplanck as a “militant” when it came to dealing with the Indians. It is very likely that he personally participated in this raid on February 25, 1643 – particularly since he had a property interest in the area (which may also help to explain his attitude toward the Indians). Indeed, one old (1897) book portrays Verplanck as the “commander” of the Dutch forces during this war with the Indians. If that is so, he might well have been placed in charge of the soldiers and citizens who attacked the Indians in Pavonia because he knew the territory so well. Certainly Abraham Verplanck would have felt a strong stake in the outcome of the affair.

Kieft's foolish offensive against the Indians (foolish because the Dutch were, after all, a heavily outnumbered minority that depended on the Indians for many things, not least the pelts that were the colony's economic engine) backfired when the Indians retaliated. The continuing warfare in 1643 and 1644 left many settlers' properties in ruins, including those in Pavonia. (As we have seen, Verplanck's own holdings were among those damaged in the conflict.) The result of this fighting was a serious blow to New Netherland. There was heavy loss of life. Refugees forced to abandon their properties huddled in the overcrowded fort. Much of what had been accomplished during the previous dozen years was lost. Perhaps as many as half of those who had come to New Netherland returned to Europe, and the population of New Amsterdam in particular dropped precipitously.

The open warfare that followed Kieft's offensive against the Indians also gave rise to a famous anecdote, still recounted after nearly four hundred years. It involves Abraham Verplanck's mother-in-law, Adrienne {Cuvellier} Vigne, a woman we will meet in due course but whose reputed actions should be related in this context. (The widowed Adrienne was actually Adrienne Damen at this time, having married another member of The Twelve, Jan Damen, sometime during the 1630s.) In one successful Dutch raid on the Canarsie Indians, numerous prisoners were taken and the heads of other Indians were brought back to New Amsterdam displayed on long poles as trophies. As the prisoners and the poles were coming into the town, many of the women abused the Indian captives.

Adrienne gained her notoriety by (it is said) kicking around heads that had fallen off the poles, much as one would dribble a soccer ball. This story, firmly implanted in the folklore of New York City, continues to be repeated in scholarly histories of the city centuries later, although Adrienne's identity as the kicker is not always given in these accounts.

After hostilities had died down (and the West India Company in Amsterdam had begun to show an interest in investigating the matter), Kieft's enemies tried to blame him for the conflict. In return, Kieft tried to make scapegoats out of the signers of the petition. Abraham Verplanck was one of three men who, on the advice of an investigating group, the Company summoned back to the Netherlands for "examination," but it does not appear that he ever actually returned there.¹⁶

Historians differ as to whether Kieft or the others should bear the brunt of the responsibility for the unsavory treatment of the Indians. Some of Abraham's contemporaries did lay a share of the blame on him, and it seems clear that he was at least an instigator and perhaps worse. On the other hand, we should not lose sight of the fact that through his participation in these events Abraham Verplanck played a role in a key turning point in New Netherland's history. His membership among The Twelve, whatever we may think of his views toward the Indians or his specific actions, is in itself

¹⁶ Director Kieft was soon recalled but died at sea while returning to the Netherlands.

significant because that group is regarded as having laid the foundation for popular government in the young colony. In addition, the incident helped to undermine the Company's confidence in Kieft so that it replaced him with a far more significant and effective figure, Petrus Stuyvesant, without whom New Amsterdam, so badly governed to this point, might not have survived.

The name of Abraham Verplanck's father, we learn from the younger man's patronymic, was **ISAACSE VERPLANCK**. We do not know the name of Abraham's mother, but it might have been Abigail (the given name of the first daughter born to Abraham and Maria). Isaacse, probably born about 1580, may have emigrated to New Netherland as well, but there is no documentary record of his having done so. A woman named Abigail Verplanck did come to New Netherland during the mid-1600s. We do not know her age and cannot be sure that she was related either to Isaacse or to Abraham, but it seems likely that she was.

It also seems quite possible that Isaacse was a relative of Jacob Albertsen Planck of Edam in North Holland, the Netherlands, whom the patroon Kiliaen van Rensselaer had hired in 1634 for a three-year term as his representative and agent in Rensselaerswyck. Planck and the patroon made their agreement in March 1634 and Planck arrived on the *Eendracht (Unity)* during the summer of that year. Since our Abraham Verplanck is known to have arrived in New Amsterdam about then, it is possible the two sailed aboard

the same ship. In addition, Jacob Planck co-signed a note for Abraham Verplanck's purchase of the former Pauw land in 1638, so some sort of family relationship between them seems likely. Perhaps young Abraham (a younger son without many prospects in the Netherlands?) was sent to New Netherland with his uncle, Jacob (who had brought along his own son named Abraham), but we have no solid evidence that Jacob Planck and our Abraham Verplanck were related.¹⁷ If they were, we are probably right in thinking that Abraham too was from Edam and that the name of his grandfather, Isaacse's father, was Albert Verplanck.

There are scattered references to Verplancks in the Netherlands that offer some possible clues about the origins of the Verplancks who came to North America. Many of these European Verplancks were not from North Holland but from the southern part of the country, perhaps even from what is now Belgium, and at least one was a Huguenot. That one of them served in the Dutch fleet with a relative of Kiliaen van Rensselaer hints that the patroon might have decided to hire Jacob Albertsen Planck as his representative in New Netherland because of some earlier knowledge of his abilities. All of this must be considered conjecture, as we know nothing definite about the Verplancks in the Netherlands.

¹⁷ Jacob Planck's term was not renewed (patroon Van Rensselaer regarded him, like all the other agents he sent to the colony, as deficient in submitting reports and accounts), and Planck went back to the Netherlands in 1638 or 1639. He settled his accounts with Van Rensselaer by 1643, but evidently Jacob Planck returned to New Amsterdam because the court minutes refer to a man named Jacob Albertsen Verplanck who was deceased by 1656. This makes him plausibly a contemporary of (and so possibly a brother to) our Abraham's father, Isaacse.

We turn our attention now to the Vigne¹⁸ family of Abraham Verplanck's wife, Maria. As we have seen, she was born in France about 1608 to 1610 and died in Albany in 1670 or 1671. Maria Vigne's younger siblings were baptized between 1618 and 1623 in the French Reformed Church in Leyden (now Leiden), in the Netherlands, and it is possible that our Maria was also baptized there. She came to New Netherland with her parents – exactly which year she arrived is an issue that will be considered shortly – and married a man named Jan Roos, probably about 1631. Jan and Maria had one child before Roos died the next year and she subsequently married Abraham Verplanck. From this single child of Maria {Vigne} Roos, later the wife of Abraham Verplanck, both Theodore and Franklin D. Roosevelt are descended. Thus we and those two American presidents have a common ancestor in this woman, Maria Vigne, who was brought to New Amsterdam not long after 1600.

Maria's parents were **GUILLAUME VIGNE** and **ADRIENNE A. {CUVELLIER} VIGNE**, both of whom were born sometime between 1580 and 1590. Guillaume, whose name was customarily rendered as Guleyn in Dutch, is thought by one researcher to have been born in St. Waast-le-Haut, France, in 1586 to a family that may have come from nearby Cambrai. Although Guillaume and Adrienne were married in France in 1608,

¹⁸ Some sources spell the name Vingre, and some researchers believe that the name – however it was spelled – may have meant “vine” in French. The line died out after Maria's only brother, Jan, left no male issue.

they were in actuality Walloons – a Calvinist Gallic-Teutonic, French-speaking group that lived in both parts of the area that is bisected by the present border separating Belgium and France. Valenciennes itself was heavily Walloon in composition.¹⁹ Many of the “French” emigrants to New Amsterdam were actually Walloon Calvinists, although others did come to the Dutch outpost from northern France.

During the 1500s, Valenciennes (formerly located in both the Netherlands and Belgium but today in northeast France, not far from the Belgian border) was in the southern portion of the Spanish-controlled Walloon provinces of the Netherlands. When Philip II of Spain ascended to the throne in 1556, he began to take action against what he saw as religious heresy in the Low Countries. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Dutch and their attitude of tolerance of beliefs had begun to attract those, like the Walloons, who were seeking asylum from religious persecution. Valenciennes had in fact been the first Dutch city to offer resistance to the Spanish rulers of the Netherlands, in 1567, and it had suffered severe destruction as a result. Many of its inhabitants had taken refuge elsewhere; others, apparently including some members of the Vigne and Cuvellier families, fell victim to Spanish repression.

A twelve-year truce between the Spanish and the Dutch rebels was nearing an end in 1621. As it came to a close, some Walloons and French who had been living temporarily

¹⁹ Other Walloons came from Hainault, Namur, Liege, and Luxembourg.

in England decided that emigration to America would be preferable to returning to their home territory, since it was likely to be the scene of renewed hostilities between the Spanish and the Dutch. First they asked the English to let them go to Virginia, then persuaded the new Dutch West India Company to permit them to settle in New Amsterdam instead. The Vignes were evidently living in the tolerant and safe city of Leyden by early 1623, for their youngest daughter was baptized there on March 16 in that year. We do not know if the Vignes were among those who had lived briefly in England, but we are fairly sure that they were part of the body of Walloons who departed for New Netherland at this time, as many of these emigrants had previously been refugees in the city of Leyden.

It is possible the Vignes had learned about the opportunities for settlement in New Netherland through a family connection: one Vigne researcher has identified a Cuvellier woman who was married to a Dutch merchant instrumental in the Van Tweenhuysen Company that had sent to North America on the very first Dutch trading expedition, headed by Captain Adriaen Block, in 1613. As a group the Walloons were drawn to emigration to New Netherland not only by the prospect of greater freedom of worship but also by the West India Company's promises of livestock and land ownership after they had worked six years there. About thirty Walloon families, well over 100 persons in all, volunteered to be among those who would populate the base the Company expected to establish in New Netherland.

After formally swearing allegiance to the Dutch West Indies Company and to the Dutch government, an advance party of Walloons and others sailed on the *Eendracht (Unity)* on January 25, 1624; its captain was Cornelius May (after whom Cape May is named). When the ship arrived in what is now New York Harbor it had to drive off a French vessel that was there to claim the area for France. The main body of Walloons followed two months later aboard the *Nieuw Nederlandt (New Netherland)*. We do not know which group included the Vignes, presuming that they *were* among the Walloons who came to New Netherland at this time. Some of the Walloons were deposited on what is today called Governor's Island, just off the southern tip of Manhattan Island; others were planted in locations in what are now New Jersey and Connecticut, on an island in the Delaware River, and at Fort Orange (already ten years old in 1624) more than 150 miles up the Hudson River. This dispersion of families was in keeping with the Dutch concept of claiming land by having persons actually inhabit it – the land, in this case, being the area adjoining the three key rivers that the Dutch intended to control: the Fresh (Connecticut), North (Hudson), and South (Delaware) Rivers.²⁰

We do not know whether the Vigne family lived for a brief time in one of these other locations or remained the entire time on Manhattan Island itself, but since most of the couples were sent someplace other than Manhattan Island it seems likely that Guillaume

²⁰ The Walloon settlement on the Delaware River was on an island then called High Island and now called Burlington Island, which is about halfway between Trenton and Philadelphia.

and Adrienne began their lives in New Netherland at one of the several outposts.²¹ Within a few years, between 1626 and 1628, unfriendly Indian neighbors had led the Dutch to consolidate all of these weak and scattered settlements on Manhattan Island, which Peter Minuit had “purchased” from the local Indian tribes. Discouraged, more than half of the surviving Walloons had by now returned to Europe, but the Vigne family stayed in New Netherland. They are thus the very first of our many ancestors to have come to America, in 1624.

If an old tradition is correct, though, the Vignes might have arrived in America a decade earlier than this, even before Manhattan Island began to be settled. Indeed, they are sometimes credited – by a plaque at City Hall in New York City, for instance – with having been the parents of the first child of European origins born in Manhattan, in 1614: their son Jan Vigne (our Maria's younger brother). Some researchers have wondered if the Vignes might have been accompanying Captain Block, who after his ship (*The Tiger*) burned was forced to winter on uninhabited Manhattan Island during 1613-1614.²² According to tradition, Guillaume Vigne was an early trader for the United New Netherland Company and had his family with him during his several brief stays on Manhattan Island before they came to New Netherland to live. Several Vigne children were baptized in Leyden between 1618 and 1622, however, and so – unless the Vigne

²¹ One book on Huguenot immigrants to America states that the Vignes arrived in New Amsterdam from French Flanders in 1624, which suggests that they did not live in any of the other places where the Walloons were planted in New Netherland before they settled in New Amsterdam itself.

²² It is this man who gave his name to Block Island.

family returned to Leyden from America for a time during this decade, which is possible but improbable – it seems most likely that the Vignes arrived in North America in 1624.²³ Moreover, the date of 1614 for Jan Vigne's birth depends on a casual estimate of his age (as “about sixty-five”) made many years later, and to some eyes (including mine) the estimate itself appears to have been written as “fifty-five” and then changed. Jan Vigne seems to have been in school, and so a minor, as late as 1635, which also argues for considering 1624 as the year of his birth. Although it is true that his contemporaries often regarded Jan as the first European child born on the island, this could have been so even if the Vigne family had arrived in 1624 rather than in 1614; the point at issue is only *which* year they had arrived.

Whatever year the Vigne family actually arrived in North America, and whether or not Guillaume was at one time an itinerant trader, we know that once they were definitely residing on Manhattan Island during the 1620s he was engaged primarily in agriculture. He was in fact the very first tenant on the six farms north of what would become Wall Street (near Pearl Street) that the West India Company owned, laid out, and rented in its effort to produce foodstuffs for its soldiers and employees in New Amsterdam.²⁴ In time Guillaume Vigne, like so many others, undoubtedly took up the cultivation of tobacco. In any case, he did not live in New Netherland for long: Guillaume Vigne died in New Amsterdam no later than April 30, 1632, when his will was recorded.

²³ One researcher contends that the family arrived on board *The Tiger* itself.

²⁴ See slide 08826 for the site of the Vigne farm as of 1997.

A few years later, Adrienne married a man named Jan Jansen Damen, a prominent and relatively wealthy resident of New Amsterdam; Maria, already married herself by this time, is mentioned as one of the four children of Guillaume and Adrienne Vigne. The Damen-Vigne marriage, which took place as early as 1635 but no later than May 7, 1638, brought together two families that owned a large share of the settled property in the young community.²⁵ Damen was well-connected – he too would serve as a member of The Twelve – and the churchwarden. The couple's combined holdings (known as the Kolk Hook farm), just outside the city wall, were largely on the east side of Broadway (near present-day Maiden Lane, Pine Street, and William Street) but also ran westward to what was then the shore of the Hudson (North) River, very near to where the World Trade Center would later be built upon landfill – nearly the breadth of Manhattan from river to river before such landfills broadened the island's original size and shape. The Damen farmhouse itself seems to have been on what is now Pine Street, although Adrienne seems to have kept a smaller house (perhaps the one she and Guillaume had lived in) about where 112 Broadway is today.²⁶

²⁵ It was from Damen that Abraham Verplanck had bought his property at Pearl Street and Fulton Street, in an area known as The Ferry.

²⁶ Later, the Equitable Building was constructed on the site of Damen's farmhouse. (See slide 08827, taken in 1997.) The 1660 Castello plan of New Amsterdam shows Damen's larger house and the smaller one owned by Adrienne. The site of her house is not just a matter for curiosity, for it is likely that in accordance with custom she was buried in a family plot near the house, and perhaps Guillaume was buried there as well. (See slide 08828, also taken in 1997, for the site of Adrienne's house.) In 1658 her daughter Maria was among Adrienne's heirs who were sued by the elder of the church for failing to pay for her grave. This entire area was also in the zone affected by the great fire of September 21, 1776.

In the New Netherland court minutes are some of the details of an embarrassing public spectacle, a disagreement of some sort between Damen and his new wife's family, including Jan Jansen's inherited son-in-law, Abraham Verplanck. Damen filed suit to throw these relatives out of his house, and there was a counter suit on behalf of the relatives he was trying to eject. Eventually, the family's harmony would be restored. Damen died as early as 1651 and surely was deceased by 1653, when the court minutes refer to our Adrienne as his widow.

The twice-widowed Adrienne herself died in 1655, almost certainly in New Amsterdam. Unfortunately, we do not know anything about her Cuvellier family, except that it was originally probably French.²⁷ As for the Vigne line, we know only that Guillaume's father was named **JEAN DE LA VIGNE**. One researcher describes Jean as the Walloon *dominie* (minister) in Amsterdam from 1585 until his death in 1622, but I have not been able to confirm that this man was the Jean de la Vigne who was Guillaume's father. The Jean who served as *dominie* had been born about 1560 in Valenciennes, France, and so a link with Guillaume does seem plausible.

²⁷ According to some researchers, the name Vigne may indicate that members of this family originally were makers of small casks – coopers, in other words. On the other hand, one researcher has pointed out that “Jean de la Vigne” or “Jean des Vignes” was often used as a pseudonym or euphemism in France at that time – for example, as the name of the puppet for whom jugglers “performed,” as a fool or stupid person, or as a drunk. It seems possible that Guillaume's father chose this somewhat whimsical name as an alias when he was the target of religious persecution and that the name stuck, but this is only speculation on my part.

There are grounds for doubting such a link, however. We can presume that Jean de la Vigne had fled France at some point during the 1580s for the haven of the Netherlands. If Maria Vigne was born in France about 1608 to 1610, however, we can date the emigration of her parents Guillaume and Adrienne to the Netherlands much later – between then and the early 1620s. In addition, one source suggests that Guillaume and Adrienne joined Leyden’s Walloon church in October 1619, which makes one wonder why they would flee there rather than to Amsterdam if Guillaume’s father Jean was the dominie in Amsterdam. In the end, without more evidence we cannot be positive that our Guillaume was related to the Jean de la Vigne who went to Amsterdam during the 1580s.²⁸

Having completed our look at the Verplanck family with whom Melgert van der Poel intermarried in 1668, along with the earlier Vignes, we return for a final time to our long and well-documented Vanderpool line. As we shall see, sometime between December 1652 and May 1654, when Melgert van der Poel was still a boy about ten years old, his parents decided to move to New Netherland. Here Melgert would reach his maturity about the time, during the mid-1660s, when his new home went from being the Dutch community of Beverwyck and Fort Orange to being the English town of Albany. While

²⁸ As a later chapter will explain in more detail, there was intense hostility to religious dissent and what we call Protestantism in France until the Edict of Nantes of 1598, which allowed Protestants in France (most notably the ones called Huguenots) some religious freedom. The Edict of Nantes was not formally revoked until 1685, but Huguenots were sometimes persecuted – and never felt secure – in France even between 1598 and 1685. Jean de la Vigne's departure for the Netherlands probably reflected this feeling of insecurity.

he was growing up, Melgert undoubtedly learned his father's profession, or professions: officially a cabinet maker and miller, Melgert's father Wynant was also a dealer in furs and a trader, as so many others in Albany were.

In adulthood, though, Melgert van der Poel would become known as a "gun stocker," someone who fabricated the wooden stocks for guns whose metal parts were mostly imported from Europe. Albany also had a craftsman who made gunlocks, though, and presumably he and Melgert maintained a business relationship. Clearly Melgert traded with the Indians as well: on one occasion he was fined for having Indians "in his residence," which the authorities regarded as *prima facie* evidence that the resident was engaged in illicit trade in furs. In addition, both Melgert and his father signed petitions advocating freer trade with the Indians. Like his father, Melgert also sawed lumber into boards – first while working for one of his father's competitors, whose sawmill he later purchased, and then for himself. Melgert acquired a house and lot from his father on March 31, 1679, using as credit wages he had earned in his father's employ.²⁹ His home in Albany was located on the south side of State Street and is said to have abutted "the fort." This was presumably the new English fort (Fort Albany), begun in 1676, although the reference is vague enough to pertain to the Dutch stockade that had been built in 1659.³⁰

²⁹ Presumably this was the lot mentioned later in this chapter and shown in slide 11631, taken in 2005.

³⁰ The English fort was located near the present St. Peter's Church, about two-thirds of the way up what is now State Street. See slide 08779 for a general view of this area in 1997. Maps indicate that Van der Poel's house would have been below Lodge Street, across from the modern hotel building. One source, however, places it on the north side of State Street instead, at the corner of Pearl Street.

Melgert van der Poel seems to have been a solid citizen of Albany, one of a small group (no more than thirty members) of Dutch traders, merchants, and artisans who formed the core of the old Dutch community that after the English conquest found itself somewhat uneasily confronted by “foreign” rule. The sons of Albert Bradt and Abraham Verplanck were also in this group, which was bound together not only a Dutchmen but as neighbors, commercial partners, and in-laws. Most of them lived in a small area below the new English fort on the hill in Albany, now the site of New York’s State Capitol Building. This tightly knit and inbred Dutch community would continue to dominate economic, social, and political life in Albany for many years to come, in spite of English rule.

In 1683 Melgert and his father, along with Albert Bradt, are listed among those who pledged modest sums toward the salary of a new minister for the Dutch Reformed Church, and in 1686 Melgert served as an assistant alderman in Albany; later he was a juror and a fire master.³¹ Although he is not listed by name on the census of Albany taken in June 1697, it is probable that he is the “Melgert Wendell” whose place of residence and family seem to match those of our Melgert van der Poel. Melgert van der Poel also signed a loyalty oath that year.

³¹ Bradt’s contribution to this cause seems a bit odd in view of the fact that he was not only a practicing Lutheran but someone who had run afoul of the Dutch Reformed orthodoxy.

Sometime toward the end of his life, Melgert van der Poel may have moved to Kinderhook, in Columbia County, New York, perhaps as a consequence of one of his son's having married (in 1696) the daughter of a man with extensive land holdings there.³² There exists a deed dated March 9, 1694, recording Melgert's purchase (from the Dutch Reformed Church) of the water rights at a sawmill "below the falls" on Bevers Kill, and in 1702 he is listed among the freeholders of Albany who welcomed a new governor. If he did move to Kinderhook, therefore, it must not have been until after 1702. His will mentions the sawmill and two slaves.

Melgert van der Poel died in Albany in 1710, reportedly having sired children right up to the last year of his life.³³ Following the death of his wife Ariaantje, evidently about 1690, Melgert was married again, on June 29, 1692. His second wife was named Elizabeth {Teller} van Tricht van der Poel.³⁴

³² The father referred to was Lourens van Alen, and the daughter was Catharina {van Alen} van der Poel. The Van der Poel portion of the lands ran along the river east to Pine Ridge (the present Ridge Road) and Kalkoenberg ("Turkey Hill"). The name Poelsburg was once given to this area, but this name is no longer in use. We do not know for sure that Melgert van der Poel actually lived in Kinderhook. Some of the Vanderpools from this branch of the family were Loyalists during the American Revolution, and one of them, Isaac Vanderpoel (as he spelled the name) even commanded a company of pro-British refugees on Staten Island. The house of one of the Vanderpools from this branch of the family is prominently featured in historic Kinderhook, which was the home of President Martin Van Buren. See slide 08821 (1997) for the site of the old Dutch church in Kinderhook, which some members of the Van der Poel family likely worshipped in, were married at, or were buried from. It is possible that Melgert was among them.

³³ Melgert's biography in *Genealogies of the First Settlers of Albany*, however, states that he was deceased by 1700.

³⁴ Melgert had at least two children (in 1693 and 1695) with his second wife, who died in 1720. Born in 1652, Elizabeth Teller was the daughter of a merchant named William Teller and his first wife, Margaret {Donchesen} Teller, who died before 1664. Teller later married a widow, Marie {Varlett} Teller. Elizabeth's first husband was Abraham van Tricht.

Melgert's parents were **WYNANT GERRITSE VAN DER POEL**³⁵ and **[CATRINA] TRYNTJE MELGERS {ROCHOLTE}**³⁶ **VAN DER POEL**. In the Vanderpool family histories, Wynant is said to have been born in the Netherlands in 1620 and to have emigrated to Fort Orange/Rensselaerswyck around 1644 to 1647, but as we have seen later research indicates that his date of birth was 1617 and that he and his parents were still in Amsterdam as late as December 1652.³⁷ Trijntje was born in 1619. Her parents were **MELCHIOR ROCHOLTE** and a woman, **NEELTIE CORNELIS**, whose family name is unknown. In fact, we know very little more about either of these parents of Trijntje, except that they were presumably married by 1603 because they had a son born during the next year. Melchior was possibly a knife-maker, since his son also practiced this trade. Melchior and Neeltie were living in Korsjessteeg in Amsterdam as of 1624.³⁸

On October 21, 1640, Wynant van der Poel and Trijntje Rocholte were married in Sloterdijk, a small village at that time near to but now a part of Amsterdam.³⁹ In 1640, the couple resided on a street named Langestraat,⁴⁰ where they evidently continued to live in later years. Seven children from this marriage were baptized in Amsterdam between

³⁵ Sometimes spelled Poell.

³⁶ This name was sometimes spelled Rocholt or Rocholts. On the marriage register it is spelled Roocholte. Tryntje was a common diminutive for Catrina.

³⁷ Thus the information contributed to the LDS that Wynant van der Poel was born in Fort Orange or Kinderhook in 1628 or 1629, and that he was married in New Amsterdam on October 1, 1640, cannot be correct. Other information also contributed to the LDS gives the year 1650 as the date of his marriage but wrongly places that marriage in Fort Orange/Rensselaerswyck.

³⁸ This may be the street called Korsjespoortsteeg today, which runs between the canals called Herengracht and Singel. It is in what was in the 1600s the far northwest corner of Amsterdam.

³⁹ Sloterdijk was a separate community west of the old city of Amsterdam, on the canal to Haarlem. It has been a part of Amsterdam since 1921 but is said to retain the feel of the small village it once was.

⁴⁰ This street runs parallel to Herengracht and Singel and so crosses Korsjespoortsteeg.

1641 and 1652; at least three of them died young and were buried from the New Church. Our Melgert, as we have seen the second of their sons to bear that name, was the oldest surviving child.

Sometime between 1652 and mid-1654, when Wynant was first mentioned in New Netherland, he and Trijntje decided to emigrate to New Netherland, specifically to the town at the northern end of the river highway flowing from Beverwyck to New Amsterdam at the mouth of the Hudson River, which the Dutch called the North River. Wynant may have been sponsored by a brother or other relative who worked for the West India Company.⁴¹ In any case, the arrival of the Van der Poels in Albany reflects the more vigorous recruiting of families that the West India Company was engaged in during the mid-1600s, as the company realized the economic potential of its New Netherland colony. In addition, adventurous young Dutchmen eager to get ahead were drawn to New Netherland, especially as publicity about New Amsterdam's agitation for self-government beginning in 1649 brought the opportunities in the colony as a whole to their attention. Wynant van der Poel apparently was among those who decided to cast his and his family's lot with New Netherland.

That first reference to Wynant in Beverwyck, on May 12, 1654, was his being fined for not yet having built a structure on his lot (an indication that he was trading with the

⁴¹ Some researchers believe that Wynant's older brother, Teunis, also came to New Netherland. This man later took Spitzbergen as his family name.

Indians for pelts without having fulfilled his promise to build the house – what the Dutch called the “hearth and light” – that would legitimize this activity) and for fighting. He continues to appear in the colony’s documentary records, which show that he was not only a sawyer but also what was called a master cabinetmaker. Like most of the Dutch residents, he undoubtedly continued to be active in the fur trade with the Indians.⁴² We know that Wynant van der Poel carried on active business dealings with firms in Amsterdam, and trade in pelts probably accounts for these relationships. We cannot rule out the possibility, though, that some of Wynant’s trade relationships were associated with his exporting of finished woodworking.

The New Netherland records also describe numerous commercial and property disagreements in which Wynant was involved, mostly indebtedness and violations of contracts, but other disputes erupted over the damage that Wynant’s hogs had done to a neighbor’s oat sheaves, his drinking of another man’s wine without permission, his failure to pave his sidewalk, his possession of more land than his patent specified, his defamation of someone’s character (he accused a woman of being a chicken thief), and his not furnishing a deed for a lot that he had sold. In some of these instances Wynant was described as having used abusive language or even threats (of murder in one case), and there were several physical altercations involving Wynant as well. In one notorious

⁴² It is possible that Wynant actually made *kisten*, elaborately carved trunks in which Dutch families packed away their valuable belongings, for this is the Dutch word that is usually translated as “cabinet.” Men with Wynant’s woodworking skills often made gun stocks as well, which may explain why his son, Melgert, took up this craft.

incident, the colony's secretary – evidently inebriated – railed at Van der Poel, said that he “would have the old fool hanged as the mill is done,” and insulted Wynant's wife as a “big slut” with fat legs. In another incident, Wynant van der Poel struck a wheelwright with one of his wheel spokes after arguing with the man.

Here, then, we seem to have another contentious – and probably hard-drinking – Dutchman (although litigation over seemingly trivial matters does seem to have been something of an indoor sport in New Netherland). Even Wynant's wife Trijntje got into trouble on more than one occasion and in one instance was assaulted by another resident, who defended herself by saying that Trijntje had struck first.

Wynant van der Poel appears to have owned several houses, lots, and farmland that he rented out. His own residences in Albany were at 12 North Pearl Street, which he purchased in 1670, and at 10 James Street. In 1669 and 1679 he is also shown owning two lots on Chapel Street, just north of State Street, and in the latter year his son Melgert is shown living there as well. All of these properties were in the heart of downtown Albany, as it was now called.⁴³ Although Wynant van der Poel, like so many other Dutch

⁴³ The first of these properties was on the west side of Pearl Street and extended nearly as far as Chapel Street, between Steuben Street and Maiden Lane. Because of the rearrangement of streets here in later years, its present location seems to be about where Pine Street intersects Pearl Street. See slide 11639, taken in 2005, for this location. The second Van der Poel property, on James Street, extended between that street and Broadway just north of Maiden Lane. Here again the later Pine Street may cover the site of Wynant van der Poel's property. See slide 11635, also taken in 2005, for its approximate location. The third property, which ran most of the way toward Pearl Street, is now the site of a modern hotel building – one in which I had stayed long before I knew where the Vanderpools had lived in Albany. See slide 11631, taken in 2005, for a view of the location of the two lots on Chapel Street. See the various maps of Albany in my files for information about the locations of all these properties.

residents of New Netherland, apparently never learned to read the language the new English administrators and soldiers brought with them in 1664, in time he became one of the most prosperous of Albany's residents: of 143 householders who were taxed to contribute to a new palisaded fence in 1679, only eight were assessed more than Wynant was and only three others paid the amount he did. (Wynant's son Melgert was, not surprisingly, taxed considerably less.) And yet, even in comparison with the famously modest nature of the houses of traders in Albany, Wynant's house was regarded as small because he could not get a keg through the front door.⁴⁴

Unusually for the Van der Poels, or in fact most of our families, we are in the position of knowing some details about the life and work of the female head of the family. In Beverwyck, Wynant's wife Trijntje {Rocholte} van der Poel was employed at least from 1656 onwards as an officially appointed *vroedvrouw*, meaning "midwife" – a profession that had considerable visibility and prestige in New Netherland, as it did in the Netherlands itself. Midwives were required to take an oath promising good behavior, conscientious care, and fair fees. Trijntje died in Albany on August 17, 1674.⁴⁵

Whatever his other activities, Wynant van der Poel is, like Albert Bradt, most remembered today for having been a sawyer. He evidently owned more than one

⁴⁴ One case in which Wynant was involved, in 1682, is notable because an Englishman accused of encroaching on Wynant's land defended himself by challenging the casual Dutch customs by which land ownership was documented.

⁴⁵ When the governor appointed Trijntje as a midwife in 1670, the record noted that she had already been practicing her trade for fourteen years.

sawmill, but the one for which he is best known was located on the east bank of the Hudson River in what is now the southern portion of the city of Troy, New York.⁴⁶ He may not have been the first owner of this sawmill, for the creek on which it stood had been acquired from the Indians on January 27, 1651. His ownership of the mill, however, led to this creek's taking his own name: by the later 1600s it had become known as Wynantskill, the name it continues to bear today.⁴⁷

Wynant's partner at this sawmill until 1660 was Abraham Vosburgh. After his partner's death that year, Wynant engaged in a long-running legal dispute with Vosburg's widow, Geertruyt Pieterse {Coeymans} Vosburgh, over their conflicting interests. As we have seen, Geertruyt was Albert Bradt's third wife; indeed, she and Albert were married and then separated during the lengthy period – more than ten years – while Geertruyt's dispute with Wynant van der Poel was mired in the courts. The dispute was finally settled in October 1674 when Wynant purchased Vosburgh's half of the sawmill and a dwelling at the site.⁴⁸ In 1685, Wynant seems to have sold a half-share in this sawmill and to have given the other half to his son Gerrit. Wynant van der Poel and Albert Bradt

⁴⁶ One of Wynant's other sawmills, near the Green Bos (a wooded area now part of the city of Rensselaer), burned in March 1678. Predictably, perhaps, Wynant and his partner engaged in a long-running dispute over who owed whom what after the fire.

⁴⁷ Wynantskill twists and turns from above the community known as Wynantskill (considerably upstream) down to its exit into the Hudson River in the southern part of Troy. As with Bradt's mill, the exact location can only be estimated through exploration with a topographical map. This process led me to conclude that the location was about where Mill Street (U.S. 4) divides after dropping down a substantial hill, although a higher location below Burdens Pond is also a possibility. See the USGS map for Troy South/New York, along with another map in my files and slides 08811-08814, taken in 1997.

⁴⁸ Wynant seems to have lived in Albany, though, not at the site of this dwelling, and so it seems likely that he employed another sawyer who lived there and handled the day-to-day operations at the mill.

thus were not only competitors for a dozen years or so but also had the distinction of giving their names to the tributaries on which their respective sawmills were located.

Wynant lived in Albany until 1694 but evidently died in New York City in 1695, possibly in the midst of what he intended to be a last visit to that city. His will (his second) that is dated that year states, however, that his residence is in New York City. Since the will was written on February 29, 1695, and proved on April 17, 1702, we can be sure only that he died between those dates.⁴⁹ If Wynant died in 1702, it is possible that he was among New York City's many victims in that year's yellow fever pandemic, which killed about one out of every ten of its citizens.⁵⁰ The Van der Poel family in New York City belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church on Exchange Place, and Wynant was probably buried in its cemetery there.⁵¹

Wynant Gerritse van der Poel's parents were **GERRIT VAN DER POEL** and **CORNELIA {WYNANT} VAN DER POEL**,⁵² who were married in 1613. We know nothing about the Wynant line, but the name does sound as if it could have been Dutch in origin. It is through Cornelia, therefore, that the given name Wynant – still used today by

⁴⁹ The English still used the Julian calendar at this time; it had no provision for a leap year, and so February 29 occurred every year.

⁵⁰ Another source says Wynant died in 1699. His will left his estate to his son-in-law, other than a trifling amount (six shillings) he provided for his son, Melgert. Some researchers speculate that Wynant was punishing Melgert; others believe that Melgert had already received his share of the inheritance, or that his own wealth (from Melgert's wife) made a share unnecessary.

⁵¹ This church was between Broad Street and William Street. See slides 08830 and 08831 for 1997 views of its approximate location.

⁵² One Vanderpool family historian gives her name as Weyntie Wolters.

Vanderpools in naming their children – first entered the Vanderpool family. Gerrit, who was born about 1590, is said by the Vanderpool family histories to have been a raiser of sheep or a cloth manufacturer in Gorchum (Goringen), a city at the junction of the Maas River and the Linge River in the Netherlands.

Information from the Dutch Genealogical Bureau, though, indicates that Gerrit was actually from Meppel in the province of Drenthe. He fled to Amsterdam between 1600 and 1609 in order to escape persecution for his religious beliefs and then may have emigrated sometime during the 1620s to the new Dutch outpost in the New World. There is, however, no documentary evidence that he was ever a resident in New Netherland.⁵³

A profile of the family that the Bureau provided to me speculates that Gerrit might have been the Gerrit Lambers van der Poel from Meppel who married a woman named Trijne and who lived in the Weldemansstraet near “the pool” (in this case, meaning dyke), which would account for the eventual family surname. (If this speculation is correct, Trijne would have been an earlier wife of the Gerrit who married Cornelia Wynant in 1613.) This is as far as the trail takes us, although the Vanderpool family historian cited earlier wrote that a Jon van der Poel is listed as owning 100 acres and five farms in the Netherlands as early as 1240. Others trace the family back to William IV, Count of Hainaut, Holland, and Zeeland (1304-1345), through William’s second son. The

⁵³ If this is so, Gerrit van der Poel could have emigrated to North America even earlier than the Vignes – and so would become the first of our ancestors to have arrived here.

European origins of the Vanderpool line are sufficiently vague that we should place little confidence in such information.

Thus our long Vanderpool line – one of the longest of all of our families – extends back a full nine generations from my grandmother, Glenn Vanderpool, through Samuel Green Vanderpool, James Vanderpool, John M. Vanderpool, Abraham Vanderpool, his father Abraham Vanderpool, Wynant van der Poel, Melgert van der Poel, and Wynant van der Poel to Gerrit van der Poel. Until more information comes to light, though, we must close the book on the Vanderpools and their related families and shift our focus to other some long lines in our heritage, beginning with the Chastains.