Lesson Plan: Early Dutch Contributions to United States History

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Objectives

The learner will be able to explain Dutch contributions to American culture.

The learner will be able to describe significant Dutch leaders in New Netherland.

Introduction: While many secondary schools studying colonial America emphasize the early encounters of the Spanish, French, and English on the American continent, the people who settled in the colony established by Holland, along the Hudson River, also impacted American society in long lasting ways, despite the short tenure of Dutch leadership. In a short space of 40 years, the Dutch created a climate that welcomed diverse settlers and established social norms such as religious tolerance that continue to influence political and social actions. The rule of law, for example, was a Dutch idea, re-established by the law scholar Grotius that was brought to the colony in the thinking and writings of Adrien van der Donk, and led to treaties with the American Indians, contract law, and an embryonic form of democratic government. In addition, new foods, new place names, and new words entered the English language as it evolved into a distinctly American language from Dutch contributions.

Guiding Questions:

1. What were the Dutch contributions to the formation of the early North American character?
2. What contributions or ideals of the New Amsterdam colony in North America influenced United States geography, government, and culture?
Activity 1

**Introduction**: Instructions for Using Origins Documents Worksheet #1

Give students in small groups or pairs a document to analyze. Tell them to look for the origins of an idea that is embodied in the Constitution or Bill of Rights. If necessary, do an introductory lesson to remind students what ideas are in these documents. Once students have analyzed and reported their findings, share with them that these documents did not originate in Great Britain or Ancient Greece and Rome, but in the Seven Provinces of the Netherlands. Explain that the next activities will further introduce Dutch contributions to our modern world.

**Worksheet #1**

Idea Origins Worksheet

**Document A**

*Articles of Capitulation on the Reduction of New Netherland*

*General Entries, I., 1664-1665, p.23, In Secretary of State's Office, Albany, N.Y.*

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All people shall still continue free denizens and enjoy their lands, houses, goods, ships, wheresoever they are within this country, and dispose of them as they please.

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That the townsmen of the Manhatoes shall not have any soldier quartered upon them without being satisfied and paid for them by their officers, and that at this present, if the fort be not capable of lodging all the soldiers, then the Burgomaster, by his officers, shall appoint some houses capable to receive them

**Document B**

*The Works of Sir William Temple, 1672, published in London 1814*
…[It is a] confederacy of Seven Sovereign Provinces…, but to discover the nature of their government…it must be taken in smaller pieces…composed of many little states or cities which have several marks of sovereign power within themselves…

In …Amsterdam is the famous bank…the security of the bank lies not only in the effects that are in it, but in the credit of the whole town or state…

Document C

**Flushing (Vlissingen ) Remonstrance 1657**

Right Honorable

You have been pleased to send unto us a certain prohibition or command that we should not receive or entertain any of those people called Quakers because they are supposed to be, by some, seducers of the people. For our part we cannot condemn them in this case, neither can we stretch out our hands against them, for out of Christ God is a consuming fire, and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Wee desire therefore in this case not to judge least we be judged, neither to condemn least we be condemned, but rather let every man stand or fall to his own Master. Wee are bounde by the law to do good unto all men, especially to those of the household of faith. And though for the present we seem to be unsensible for the law and the Law giver, yet when death and the Law assault us, if wee have our advocate to seeke, who shall plead for us in this case of conscience betwixt God and our own souls; the powers of this world can neither attach us, neither excuse us, for if God justifye who can condemn and if God condemn there is none can justifye……

Written this 27th of December in the year 1657, by mee, Edward Hart, Clericus

Document D

**Verhandelinge van de Unie 23 January 1579. Translated by Herbert H. Rowen**
I. Firstly, the aforesaid provinces [states] will form an alliance, confederation, and union among themselves…in order to remain joined together for all time…as if they formed only a single province [nation]…and they may not hereafter divide or permit their division….

III. [They] shall also be bound to assist each other…

IV. These revenues shall be increased or decreased only by unanimous decision…

XII. The aforesaid provinces shall be required to adhere to the same valuation of coinage..

Document E

April 6, 1568 Correspondence de Guillaume le Taciturne, Prince of Orange by Louis-Prospèr Gachard. Translated by Herbert H. Rowen

….Therefore, having been earnestly beseeched by the inhabitants of the country of both Protestant and Roman faiths to take action with the counsel of the Estates General….to protect the freedom and liberty of everyone in his religion and conscience…

Document F

Pieter La Court: The True Interests and Political maxims of the Republic of Holland and West Friesland. 1662, published in London 1702

“….consequently that is the best Government where the Chief Rulers may best obtain their own Welfare by that of the People…And that is the reason why we see that all Republicks thrive and flourish more in Arts, Maufacture, Traffick (trade), Populousness and Strength than the Dominions and Cities of Monarchs: for where there is Liberty, there will be Riches and People

Activity 2
In 2009, the City of New York celebrated the Henry Hudson discovery of the Hudson River and the subsequent claim of the lands on either side as New Netherlands. A website was established to highlight resources to educate the general public about Dutch contributions to American History. Use these parts of that site to create and complete a student online scavenger hunt.

The Half Moon was the name of Henry Hudson’s ship. Visit the website of the New Netherland Museum and the Half Moon replica to see what life was like in 1609 to explore the east coast.

http://www.newnetherland.org/

A video overview of the Dutch experience in New Netherlands, hosted by historian Barry Lewis. 56.52 minutes:


An interactive web based virtual tour of New Netherlands, created by the New Netherlands Project:

http://www.nnp.org/vtour/index.html

Home page of the New Netherlands Institute in the New York City Library, with links to resources and primary and secondary documents:

http://www.nnp.org/vtour/index.html

Interactive Map of Dutch place names in New York

The most well known governor of New Netherlands, Peter Stuyvesant, and the reason the colony did not resist the English take over, some say. 3 min


A video of an exhibit entitled Dutch New York Between East and West: The World of Margrieta van Varick. Margrieta van Varick was born in 1649, lived in New Amsterdam and contributed to the development of the colony. Hosted by co-curator Deborah Krohn. 6.35 minutes:


Scavenger Hunt Sample Worksheet #2

1. Who drew the famous map showing New Netherlands between the English Settlements at Jamestown and New England? (Adrien van der Donck)

2. Name the Governor who was recalled because he started a war with the Iroquois and other Indians in the 1640s? (Willem Kieft)

3. Why was Pieter Stuyvesant chosen to become Governor of New Netherlands? (He had proven himself to be a good organizer in previous postings in South America and in the military.)

4. Adrian van der Donk became one of the most influential early settlers of New Amsterdam. Trace his journey in North America and locate his final homestead on a map of New York and New England.

5. Why do current maps not show Battery Park? (Most of southern most Manhattan was created with landfill, including the park and the current wharfs on the East River)
6. Word Origins
Bronx
Bowery
Yonkers
Brooklyn
Flushing
Wall Street
Broadway

7. What foods were inspired by Dutch cooks? (hint doughnuts, sausages, coleslaw….)

Activity 3

Information for the teacher: The Dutch created the first forms of corporations, stock markets, and commodity futures markets that are used in the modern world.

Background information for the teachers:

Markets – physical locations where exchanges of goods and services take place – have been with us since the beginning of time. Yet since that beginning also coincides with the early political organizations humans invented for themselves, the markets have been controlled to some extent by a central authority, whether king, priest, strong man, or the representatives of the gods. They made the decisions about production and distribution. They were the ones who learned how to predict the seasons, how to check weather patterns, how to placate nervous populations with laws and orders and sacrifices to the gods.

Ancient civilizations did suffer from errors in judgment by those authorities, most often when food stockpiles were endangered by poor weather conditions. Conflicts over territory and resources were normal, part of the human condition.
Only in most remote locations were those decisions made locally, and those decisions were made with future survival in mind, not the acquisition of wealth and property.

Yet markets did exist as we know them today. Vendors, farmers, craftsmen would meet at regular times and exchange goods and services and sometimes use precious commodities, such as gold, that had come to represent value. They set their own prices, sometimes changing that price several times in one day, and these markets were tolerated and encouraged by the central authorities, because they could take part of the proceeds as a protection tax, for providing a safe place for transactions to take place.

So the idea of a market economy – one in which the questions of production and distribution are decided by buyers and sellers in the market place – is just as ancient as any other economic system. It just existed on a smaller scale. Those market incentives of self interest, comparative advantage, and profit motive have been around a long time although their descriptions were only formalized in the last 300 years.

According to economists who have studied economic situations in the past, modern day economics was first established by the Dutch. Individuals who engaged in long distance trade often invited investors to share in the costs and the profits of the trade, but risked being sued if the venture failed. Joint stock companies and the Netherland governments created the joint stock company to legally limit liability and thus make these types of ventures more inviting to potential investors. As these became established, newer investors would buy stock from older investors. The value of the stock varied because until the ship came back into port, there was no guarantee that there would be any profit, and at first, 3 in 5 ships never returned. As ship building and travel became less risky, more were willing to risk their extra monies in stock companies. In the United States, corporations have been granted both immortality, because ownership can be transferred to younger generations, and individuality, because they can contribute to political campaigns with the same freedom of speech guaranteed by the first amendment living persons enjoy.
Today ownership in corporations, called stock, is traded on various stock markets all over the world.

Additional information for teachers: Use this information to introduce the idea of the stock market as an introduction to any stock market activity.

For this activity

Begin with these pictures or something similar. These were chosen because they can be seen at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, where my students can see them. Other teachers might want to choose images in museums near their own locations.

SANDRO BOTTICELLI
Italian, 1444/45 - 1510
The Adoration of the Christ Child
Ask Questions:
What is the focus of the picture? How do you know that is the focus?
Do the surrounding details distract or promote the focus?
Why do you think this painting was made?
Possible answers: Focus is the child – light on the child everyone looking at the child. Details draw your eye to the center of the picture, Joseph’s staff, Mary’s robe, roof points downward, etc. to show religious belief and faith, possible to be instructive for the illiterate.
Drinking Figures and Crying Children  
1634  
Oil on panel  
12 1/4 x 16 7/8 inches  
Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston  
Arts of Europe

Questions:  
What is the focus of the picture? How do you know that is the focus?  
Do the surrounding details distract or promote the focus?  
Why do you think this painting was made?  
Possible answers: We are drawn to the center because that is where the light is, but is it the focus of the picture? There is a story here. Point out that some of the action is in shadow, probably to indicate that it was undesirable or unsanctioned.

Have students compare the pictures. Note the differences and any similarities (use of light, use of color). Explain that the two paintings were drawn at two different time periods – the first artist focused on ideal images and a perfect heavenly reward, the second was drawn as a warning about the vice and lack of compassion and responsibility that the artist saw in the society around him.  
The big changes that occurred between these two portraits was the Renaissance and Reformation, the changing views on values and proper religious worship, but another change had taken place as well. New territories had been discovered, new trade routes were established, new wealth was being accumulated, not just by monarchs, but also a new group of middle class merchants who found themselves with something new for their class - more than enough money. This new wealth combined with certain Protestant religious beliefs that decoration and conspicuous consumption had certain sinful limits, led to the great Tulip bubble. It was the first modern example in economic history of overzealous speculation and run away inflation. Unfortunately, it would not be the last.
The first popular history about the tulip mania was in Charles Mackay’s book published almost 200 years later, entitled “Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds” (1841).

Continue activity by sharing with students one of the versions of Charles Mackay’s Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds, http://www.econlib.org/library/Mackay/macEx3.html#Ch.3, The Tulipomania http://www.econlib.org/library/Mackay/macEx3.html#Ch.3, The Tulipomania

Published in 1841. This story has been repeated throughout the ages as a caution against speculation, and has been used as an argument both for and against some type of government intervention in the market system. There are current historians who argue that the speculation was just that, speculation, and that real currency did not exchange hands. Still, bidding in markets today continues to create such bubbles, and students may be able to think of recent examples that have occurred during their own lifetimes.

Use this information to have students to discuss how much government should either regulate or interfere in market economies. What information should businesses share with potential customers? What avenues should be available to customers in order to assess the reliability and validity of a business’ performance claims? In the United States we have both public and private oversight venues, such as government regulations and private business agencies, such as the Better Business Bureau and licensing groups such as the American Medical Association, to protect consumers from fraud. Allow students to research a regulatory agency or private group and share their findings with the class.

For further information, check out these web resources

1. David T. Valentine, New York City Clerk in the 1800’s, wrote a history of New Amsterdam and New York. Filled with colorful language and stereotypical descriptions that reveal more about the author than the era.
http://history-world.org/dutch_settlement.htm

2. Biography of Pieter Stuyvestant, written in 1928. Filled with colorful speculations that historians today would dismiss, but very entertaining.

3. Adriaen van der Donck’ on-line biography.

Resources


Museum of Fine Arts, Houston


Adriaen van der Donck *A Description of New Netherland* (The Iroquoians and Their World) 1655, ed. Charles T. Gehring and William A. Starna, translated by Diederik Willem Goedhuys( University of Nebraska Press: 2008), While in
Amsterdam, Adriaen van der Donck wrote this pamphlet while waiting to be seen by the head committee of the West India Company. He wanted to publicize the colony in order to generate interest and immigration.

Roger Panetta (Editor), Dutch New York: The Roots of Hudson Valley Culture (Fordham University Press, 2009). Book created for the 400t anniversary celebration of the founding of New Netherlands/New York, with essays about Dutch contributions over that time period. Includes many illustrations.