

# THE VOCHS BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Official Bi-monthly newsletter of the VOC Historical Society, Perth, Western Australia.  
Affiliate Member of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society (Inc).



VOLUME 9 ISSUE 1

<http://www.vochistory.org.au>

Nov-Dec 2021 & Jan 2022

Facebook: VOC Historical Society



## APOLOGIES FROM THE EDITOR:

*Saint Nicholaas, and:*



*Merry Christmas 2021; and Happy New Year 2022.*

### Sinterklaas

*Sinterklaas* is based on the historical figure of Saint Nicholas (270–343), a Greek bishop of Myra in present-day Turkey. He is depicted as an elderly, stately and serious man with white hair and a long, full beard. He wears a long red cape or chasuble over a traditional white bishop's alb and a sometimes-red stole, dons a red mitre and ruby ring, and holds a gold-coloured crosier, a long ceremonial shepherd's staff with a fancy curled top.

He traditionally rides a white horse. In the Netherlands, the last horse was called *Amerigo*, but he was "pensioned" (i.e., died) in 2019 and replaced with a new horse called *Oh zo snel* ("oh so fast"), after a passage in a well-known *Sinterklaas* song. In Belgium, the horse is named *Slecht weer vandaag*, meaning "bad weather today" or *Mooi weer vandaag* ("nice weather today"). *Sinterklaas* carries a big, red book which records whether each child has been good or naughty in the past year.



*Sinter Claes* depiction at a 16th-century house near the Dam in Amsterdam. Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of the capital of the Netherlands.

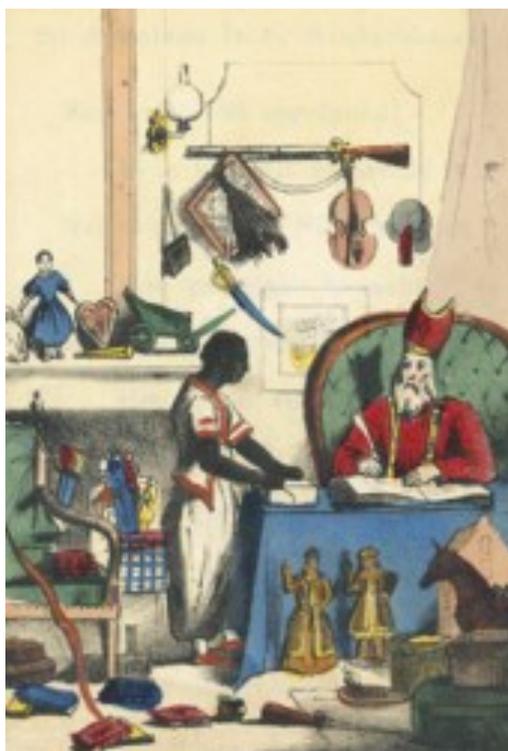


Illustration from the 1850 book *St. Nikolaas en zijn knecht* ("Saint Nicholas and his servant"), by Jan Schenkman, 1850.



*The Feast of Saint Nicholas*, by Jan Steen, 1660s.

## MODERN TRADE TENSIONS AND THE MASSACRE OF AMBOYNA

By Monica de Knecht.



**Article - Australia crosses a strategic rubicon.**

The petulant stance of Monsieur Macron, the present day President of France towards Australia, especially, in their P.M.'s trade snub, dumping a former Australian PM's deal and preferring to negotiate with the United States and United Kingdom in the AUKUS partnership; all agreeing to work together building a new class of nuclear-powered submarines, rather than the French diesel-powered vessels. One wonders if the British had not been involved and it was just US – Australia co-op, whether the French would have made such a dust up. However I don't think this will last as long as a disastrous trade dust up between England and the Netherlands which began in 1623, nearly its 400<sup>th</sup>

anniversary. I think that this will be very low key. Don't mention the war as Basil Fawlty so aptly pronounced.

HERMAN VAN SPEULT was the infamous catalyst for the MASSACRE OF AMBOYNA. He was a merchant in the service of the VOC. He left the island of Texel in 1613, heading for Bantam and arrived after a journey of about 10 months. He was formerly employed in Spain, "when he came, if report be true, full of the pox." From 1618 until 1625 he was Governor of Ambon, part of the Maluku Islands of Indonesia.

**BACKGROUND TO THE AMBOYNA AFFAIR.** The VOC was created, when the Dutch, through Willem the Silent, split from their Spanish overlords, which led to the 80 years war between the Dutch and the Spanish. In 1598, the King of Spain embargoed Dutch trade with Portugal and so the Dutch went



*Image of James I of England courtesy of westminster-abbey.org.*

looking for spices themselves. Jan Pieterszoon Coen was the most successful Governor-General, trader, as through his ruthlessness, the VOC possessed an outright monopoly of the clove trade, keeping all other European countries at bay by force of arms. At this time, the Staten-Generaal and James the 1<sup>st</sup> of England had very congenial relations.

**EARLY RUMBLINGS** In the early 1600s, there was an English soldier, adventurer and explorer, known as Sir Edward Michelborne. He tried to be appointed 'principal commander' for the first voyage of the English East India Company, but was rejected. However James the 1<sup>st</sup> of England, well known for his predilection for men, saw some trade advantage for England in employing the dashing blade as an 'interloper' – we may say spy, with only the King as his overlord. He indulged in plunder as well as seeking out trade and his actions incensed not only the Dutch but the English E.I. Company, who thought of him as a buccaneer. This grab by the Dutch and actions of the interloper Sir Edward Michelborne from what the Dutch considered the British East India Company, threatened that peace.

# THE VOCHS Bi-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## MODERN TRADE TENSIONS AND THE MASSACRE OF AMBOYNA



Old map of the Spice Islands, Indonesia, image courtesy of lib-dbserver-princeton.edu

A TREATY OF DEFENCE between the two warring companies in London in 1619 was thought instrumental in creating cooperation in the East Indies. The market in spices was divided between them in a fixed proportion of two to one (both companies having legal monopolies in their home markets.) A Council of Defence was instituted in Batavia that was to govern the merchants of both companies and most importantly for the VOC and EIC to share trading posts peacefully. However the terms of this Treaty were interpreted differently by the two companies; the Dutch concluded that each company had legal jurisdiction over the employees of both companies and the English were confident that only the Council of Defence would have jurisdiction over employees of the ‘other’ company. This difference of opinion

was instrumental to the actions of the Dutch in the Amboyna Massacre. SUSPICIOUS DUTCH.



Gregorian Calendar used by the English. Image courtesy Wikiwand.

Despite the treaty, the relations between the two companies remained strained. Both of them developed grievances against each other, including bad faith, non-performance of treaty obligations and ‘underhand’ attempts to undercut each other in the relations with the indigenous rulers with whom they both dealt. So now we come to the

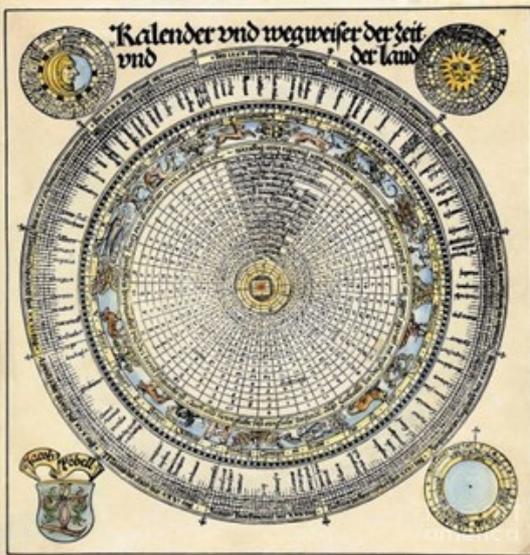


Picture from an article in The Guardian "The East India Company - the original corporate raiders."

Amboyna region, ruled by VOC Governor of Ambon, Herman van Speult. In late 1622, the Sultan of Ternate showed signs of intending to switch allegiances from the Dutch to the Spanish. Van Speult suspected the English of acting in the same way as the former buccaneer, Sir Edward Michelborne; intriguing and stirring the pot to cause this. As a result, the Dutch, at Amboyna, became suspicious of the English traders that shared the trading post with them. These vague suspicions became concrete, when in February 1623, one of the Japanese mercenary soldiers (ronin or masterless samurai, in the employ of the VOC,) was caught in the act

# THE VOCHS *Bi-MONTHLY* NEWSLETTER

## MODERN TRADE TENSIONS AND THE MASSACRE OF AMBOYNA



Roman Julian Calendar used by the Dutch. Photograph by Granger. Image courtesy of Fine Art America.

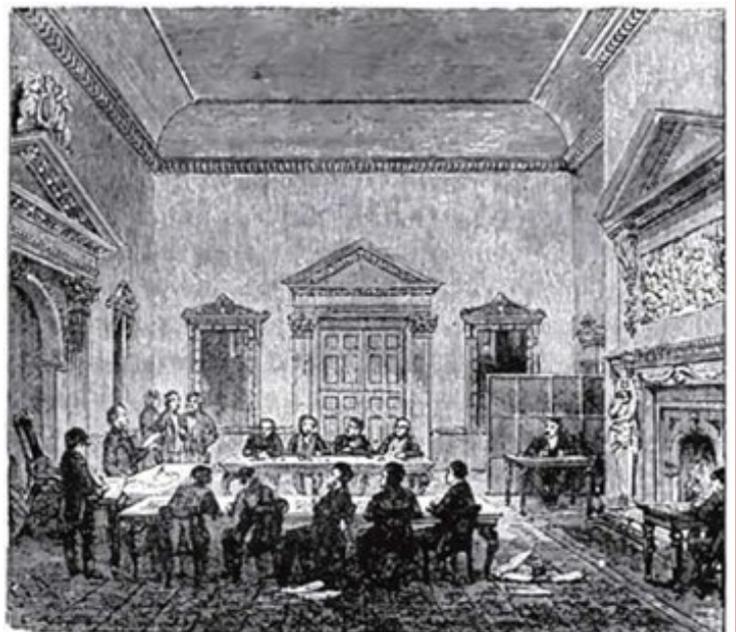
of spying on the defences of the fortress Victoria. Under torture, the soldier confessed to a conspiracy with other Japanese mercenaries to seize the fortress and assassinate the governor. He also implicated the head of the English factors, Gabriel Towerson, as a member of the conspiracy. It is a possibility that the Governor's supposed assassination was actually suggested by the torturers, but that is a surmise that can perhaps never be known. Torture consisted of having water poured over the head, around which a cloth was draped, bringing the interrogated close to suffocation; the usual interrogative procedure in the Dutch East Indies at that time. According to the Dutch trial records most suspects confessed that they were guilty as charged, with or without being tortured. Since the accusation was treason, even though none of the suspects were Dutch; it was necessary under Roman-Dutch law that they all be sentenced to death. Consequently ten Englishmen, nine Japanese and one Portuguese were executed on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1623. The non-English were all employees of the VOC, so that is possibly why the Dutch could apply the treason charges. Interestingly the English account records that it was 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1623. The reason for this is that the Dutch still went by the Julian

calendar, created by the Romans and the English went by the calendar of Pope Gregory XIII (1582). (That's handy for neither nation can 'celebrate' an anniversary on the same day.

Gabriel Towersen's head was impaled on a pole for all to see. These executions or massacres, as the English termed them, ended any hope of Anglo-Dutch co-operation in the area, but marked Dutch ascendancy in the profitable trade of spices in the Indies.

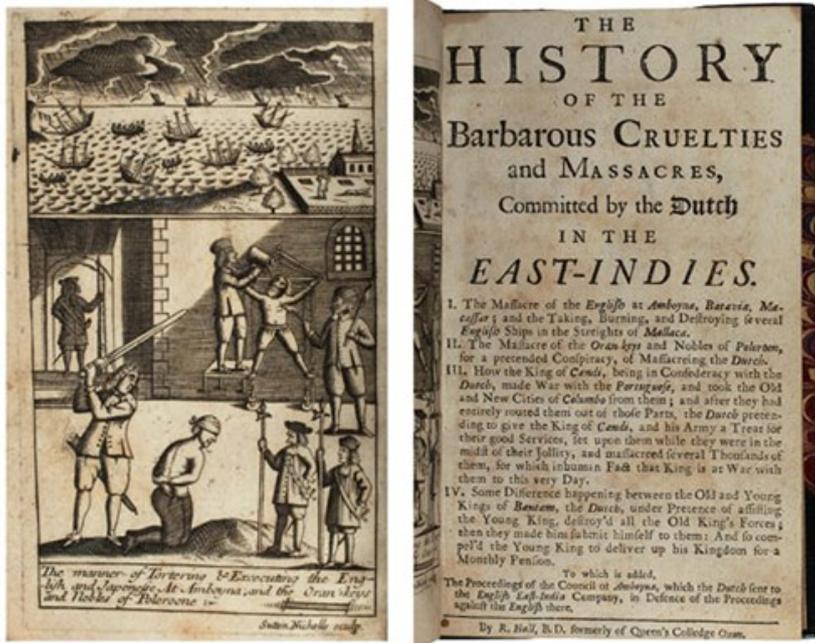
**CONTRARY TRIAL REPORTS** In the Summer of 1623, the Englishmen who had been pardoned and acquitted, sailed to Batavia and complained to the Dutch Governor-General Pieter de Carpentier and the Council of Defence about the Amboyna affair, which they said was a false accusation based upon fantasy and that the confessions had only been obtained by the most severe torture, not only 'water boarding', but other terrible torments of fire. The Dutch wouldn't listen to them, so they travelled to England, accompanied by the English factor at Batavia. Their story caused an uproar in England. The Directors of the English East India Company asked that the English Government demand reparations from the VOC and exemplary punishment of the Amboyna judges from the Dutch Government (Staten Generaal).

Evidently the English version caused the Staten Generaal to be very angry at the VOC. Nevertheless the Dutch presented their own version which contradicted the English version in essential respects. The Dutch did not want to execute the culprits of the torture and executions, as the English wanted, so the Dutch Government proposed a joint Anglo-Dutch



*Court of Directors of English East India House. [ibiblio.org/britishraj/](http://ibiblio.org/britishraj/)*

## MODERN TRADE TENSIONS AND THE MASSACRE OF AMBOYNA



**One of the propaganda pamphlets put out by the English East India Company. Image courtesy of [notevenpast.org/primary source](http://notevenpast.org/primary-source)**

commission of inquiry to establish the facts, but this was rejected by the English. One wonders why these English were pardoned and acquitted. Maybe a big mistake on the Dutch part, as if they were all executed, no one could talk. Is it possible that these angry Englishmen had actually testified against their own English to be acquitted? The Dutch initiated their own trial and the Amboyna judges were recalled and put under house arrest.

The Dutch trial progressed very slowly because the English Government refused to allow the English witnesses to travel to the Republic. Besides, the English interpreted the executions as illegal, as how could the English be executed for treason, as they were not Dutch subjects and did not work for the VOC. Therefore it was 'judicial murder' on the part of the Dutch. The Dutch maintained that they would only concentrate on 'possible' misconduct of the judges.

The English eventually travelled to the Dutch republic in 1630, with Sir Henry Vane the Elder. The Dutch allowed them to be available to the court only under restrictive conditions. The Staten-Generaal presented

the draft-verdict of the court (an acquittal of the Dutch) to the new English King, Charles the 1<sup>st</sup>. It was rejected, but the accused judges were released by the Dutch

In 1654, Towerson's heirs and others received 3,615 pounds sterling and the EIC 85,000 pounds sterling from the VOC in compensation for the events at Amboyna. The Dutch thought that was the end of the matter.

THE WAR OF THE PAMPHLETS began in the 1630s. The English East India Company was unhappy with the outcome and in 1632, its directors published an exhaustive brochure, comprising all the relevant papers, with extensive comments and rebuttals of the Dutch innocence. The Dutch meanwhile sought to influence public opinion with an anonymous pamphlet, allegedly authorised by its Secretary, Willem Boreel, in 1624. The English Ambassador procured its suppression as "libel" by the Staten-Generaal. However, an English minister in Flushing, John Winge, inadvertently translated it and sent it to England. The East India Company were very angry at this.

THE AMBOYNA MASSACRE THE CAUSE FOR ANGLO-DUTCH TRADE WARS. The English East India Company brochure contained the most gruesome details of the tortures, as related in its original "Relation". The massacre was used as casus belli (an act that justifies war), for the first Anglo-Dutch War and the brochure was reprinted as "A Memento for Holland" (1652). The Dutch lost the war and were forced to accept a condition in the 1654 Treaty of Westminster, calling for the exemplary punishment of any surviving culprits. However, it appears that no culprits were found to be alive at the time. The heirs of the English victims were awarded a total of 3,615 pounds in compensation. The brochure and its allegations also played a big role at the start of the Second Anglo-Dutch war. One of the casus belli used for the annexation of the Dutch colony, New Netherland was the Amboyna Massacre. The Treaty of Breda (1667) ending this war, appeared to have finally settled the matter.

The bulldog English again raised the Amboyna Massacre in propagandistic context, during the Third Anglo-Dutch War. John Dryden; Poet Laureate to Charles II and James II; wrote a fabricated play, entitled "Amboyna

# THE VOCHS *Bi-MONTHLY* NEWSLETTER

## MODERN TRADE TENSIONS AND THE MASSACRE OF AMBOYNA

or the Cruelties of the Dutch to the English Merchants”, apparently at the behest of his patron, who had been one of the chief negotiators of the Secret Treaty of Dover that caused England’s entry into the War. In it, Governor van Speult’s ‘fictitious’ son had raped a native princess and Towerson had killed him in a duel, thereby causing van Speult to take his revenge with the massacre. Incidentally, Herman van Speult died in a drowning incident in the Red Sea only 3 years after the Amboyna Affair (Dutch) or Amboyna Massacre (English). Surely the English must have thought this was God’s judgement, - or was it really an accident?

**MODERN DISAGREEMENTS.** General Charles de Gaulle, formerly President of France in the 1960s was very much against Britain being allowed into Europe – at that time it was known as The European Common Market. Three years after de Gaulle’s death Britain received its membership. However when the Euro was introduced as common monetary unit for Europe, in 1999, England did not play ball. It still insisted on retaining its pound sterling. But de Gaulle would surely have been rolling in his grave at its recent ‘Brexit’ after 47 years membership in Euro. In some ways, this may have exacerbated the fire of the French President’s tantrum about the submarines. Although the Australian Prime Minister was the only one that President Macron had in his sights, I have no doubt that the old enemy England being in the AUKUS deal would have not escaped his notice – and after all Australia is autonomous under the Commonwealth. First “Brexit” now a 3 way trade deal with the U.S., Britain and Australia. Although not nearly as disastrous as the Amboyna Affair, it’s still a fact that European tensions, whether they are allies or not, can still boil over when it comes to trade, in any century.

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The Amboyna Massacre was one of the reasons that the English decided to concentrate their trading interests in India.

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A view of the Dutch factory at Amboina (Ambon), early to mid-17th century. The Portuguese-built fort ("Kasteel Victoria") is seen on the left. Dutch and English flags visible. The island was the scene of the infamous Amboyna Massacre of 1623 that put an abrupt end to the spice trade ambitions of the English East India Company in the Malay Archipelago.

## The difference between Saint Nicholas & Santa Claus

### Sinterklaas vs Santa – Eight Humorous Differences



*November and December can be a very confusing time of year for expats in The Netherlands, especially for those who have never heard the name Sinterklaas or seen a Zwarte Piet before.*

Who is Sinterklaas?

If you were to ask a Dutch Person to describe Sinterklaas they would probably say something along the lines of, “He is a very nice old man who has a long white beard, dresses in red and gives gifts to all the good girls and boys in December.”

Sinterklaas vs Santa

Whatever you do, do not follow this up by asking them how that makes him any different from Santa, not unless you want to seriously damage diplomatic relations between The Netherlands and your own country. They are two very different people. They just happen to work in the same area of business. Here are eight differences that will help you tell them apart.

1. North Pole vs. Spain

**Sinterklaas:** Lives in Spain for most of the year and (as a result) gets to enjoy more sun and less hypothermia. In the middle of November he temporarily moves his base of operations to the Netherlands to

## The difference between Saint Nicholas & Santa Claus



make things easier. His arrival in the country is a huge event known as the Sinterklaas Intocht. A different Dutch city hosts the intocht each year. It is even televised.

2) Fat vs. Thin



**Santa:** Has not yet found a diet that works for him and as a result tends to be on the overweight side. His weight should not be a surprise. Millions of children all over the world leave cookies, mince pies, milk and/or wine out for him each year.

**Sinterklaas:** Manages to remain in good shape for his age.

3) Late December vs. Early December



**Santa:** Delivers gifts under the cover of night on Christmas Eve (December 24th) for children to open the next day on Christmas morning. He has to do this for the whole world in just a few hours.

**Sinterklaas:** Travels around the Netherlands, delivering gifts, on the 5th of December. The evening this happens is known as Pakjesavond (gift evening). It's also his birthday. The following day he repeats the process in Belgium and then returns

## The difference between Saint Nicholas & Santa Claus



home (to Spain) to enjoy a quiet Christmas.

#### 4) Flying vs. Sailing

**Santa:** Flies around the world in a sleigh pulled through the night sky by nine magical reindeer.

**Sinterklaas:** Sails from Spain to The Netherlands in the middle of November on his steamboat, 'Pakjesboot 12'.

**Additional Note:** It's unclear if the preference for flying vs. sailing is because Santa is afraid of sailing or Sinterklaas is afraid of flying. Maybe it has something to do with whatever happened to Pakjesboot 1 to 11.



#### 5) Nine Reindeer vs. One Horse

**Santa:** Has nine overworked magical reindeer who can fly. One of them has a nose that glows.

**Sinterklaas:** Once he has arrived in the Netherlands he travels around the country on a white horse called Amerigo. As a result, he saves money on animal feed and has to remember less names.



#### 6) List vs. Book

**Santa:** Keeps the names of the girls and boys who have been naughty or nice on a list (which must be several thousand miles long by now). He used to deal with naughty children by putting a lump of coal in their stocking. However, he has stopped doing that in an attempt to lower his carbon footprint.

**Sinterklaas:** Keeps everything organized in a book (which never seems to get any bigger despite the

growing population). His approach to child behaviour used to be much more zero tolerance. It involved throwing naughty children into a sack, beating them with twigs and dragging them back to Spain. Luckily he realized this was a bit extreme and now takes a much more positive reinforcement approach.

## The difference between Saint Nicholas & Santa Claus

### 7) Tree vs. Shoe



**Santa:** Places presents for children under the Christmas tree and/or in their stockings on Christmas Eve. This is done secretly and without him being detected.

**Sinterklaas:** Along with his helpers he already starts delivering gifts before Pakjesavond. They silently leave festive treats, chocolate letters and the occasional small gift known as a schoencadeautje (shoe gift) in children's shoes. There is often a scattering of Kruidnoten around the scene.

When Pakjesavond arrives they don't sneak around anymore. They bang on the front door as loudly as they can to announce their arrival. However, when the children open the door Sinterklaas and his helpers are already gone. Only the sack of delivered cadeautjes (gifts) remains.

### 8) Helpers



**Santa:** Helps keep fairy-tale creature unemployment rates down by employing thousands of elves as his helpers. They run his workshop in the North Pole, help keep him organized and get everything ready for his departure on Christmas Eve. However, they rarely get to leave the North Pole or take part in the deliveries themselves.

**Sinterklaas:** Has a large group of helpers known as Zwarte Pieten. They are incredibly hyper, a little accident-prone and regularly get their shoe

polish mixed up with their face cream. Despite their chaotic nature they get to take on a more active role in the festivities than their elf counter-parts. They crew the steamboat, collect the children's wish lists, deliver most of the gifts and more.

#### Conclusion – Sinterklaas vs Santa

**Santa:** Lives in a freezing cold part of the world. Tries to do all the deliveries, by himself, within just a few hours. Struggles to remain unseen in a growing world of surveillance. Is probably quite stressed.

**Sinterklaas:** Lives in a warm country. Keeps his home life (Spain) and work-life (the Netherlands/Belgium) separate. Has fun with the public attention. Splits his deliveries over two days and delegates most tasks to his helpers. Has a better life/work balance and is probably less stressed as a result.

#### Bonus Fact – The Truth About Sinterklaas vs Santa

So there you have it, proof that the two jolly gift-givers are two very different people... or are they?

In 1625 the Dutch travelled to the newly discovered continent of America. Once there they founded the small colonial town of New Amsterdam (which would later become known as New York City). Over time a lot of the traditions of the original Dutch founders were forgotten.

## The difference between Saint Nicholas & Santa Claus

However, during the American War of Independence, when the Americans wanted to highlight their non-English past, the Dutch tradition of Sinterklaas was brought back and celebrated once more. Some things were changed of course. It's even suggested that a miss translation or two led to the Sinterklaas' new name ... Santa Claus.



**THE VOCHS Bi-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

*Happy New Year 2022 from the VOC Historical Society Inc.*



# THE VOCHS BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## PUTTING STATUES ON TRIAL IN AN ERA OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

By Monica de Knecht

In 2016, long before ‘Cancel Culture’ and ‘Political Correctness’ about judging of statues got such a hold, I discussed the controversy about Jan Pieterszoon Coen’s statue in Hoorn . Now every statue is up for judgment by the new censors of life, who would have history eradicated completely. Poor old ‘Robert E Lee’ and even Abraham Lincoln, the President who fought so much for the emancipation of the black slaves, is ‘in the mix’ with this crowd.



judgment by the new censors of life, who would have history eradicated completely. Poor old ‘Robert E Lee’ and even Abraham Lincoln, the President who fought so much for the emancipation of the black slaves, is ‘in the mix’ with this crowd.

The first instance of any protest against the Dutch East India super trader was in 1944, when Indonesian freedom fighters tore down Jan Pietersz’ statue in Jakarta, but that was to symbolise the end of four centuries of Dutch occupation and that was the end of that. But in 2011, a group of citizens petitioned the local authority to have his statue removed, because they considered him responsible for genocide. After much discussion, the local authority decided to leave the statue in place and replace the old text, which depicted him as a hero, with a new description of Coen. In 2012 the local Council added a (slightly timid) section of text that criticized Coen’s involvement with the slave trade and genocidal activities. The protests did not cease, however, so the local museum organized an exhibition about him in the form of a trial, asking visitors to vote on whether he deserved a statue or not. 60% voted to keep it, not as a celebratory memorial, but as a warning –

### **Statue of Jan Pieterszoon Coen in Hoorn, The Netherlands**

with a stronger critical statement of text added to the plaque.

However, due to the power of the internet and anyone being able to start up a site for any reason, Cancel Culture, which, it is said, started as an internet joke, has now become the tool of any self-righteous nobody, to judge everyone from the past. As Shakespeare said, in his history play, Julius Caesar,

*The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones.*

Now things have gone completely out of control, with the old tradition of Sinterklaas and his Zwarte Piet now under the hammer, also. The



**Sinter Klaas and his Zwarte Piet. The controversy about the children’s feast and the Zwarte Piet.**

*Image courtesy of eternalsymbols.com*

# THE VOCHS Bi-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## PUTTING STATUES ON TRIAL IN AN ERA OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

Zwarte Piet or “Black Peters” were like the elves of Santa Claus, because in the Netherlands, Saint Nicholas came from Spain and had blackamoors, instead of elves to help him. This centuries old tradition has come under fire, just about dividing The Netherlands and other countries which also follow this tradition, like Australia, where the Dutch migrants brought it in.

Of course Jan Pieterszoon Coen is now the central figure of continued protests in Hoorn. It started again in June 2020, when skirmishes began after a largely peaceful protest. This led to a dozen arrests near the statue of the provocative figure. A few hundred people attended protesting against the statue of the 17<sup>th</sup> century officer of the VOC, who mercilessly used violence against indigenous peoples to take control of the spice trade for the Company.

In January 2021, according to Marisella de Cuba of “We Promise Heart of the Netherlands” Foundation, they are protesting against the ‘worship’ of Jan Pieterszoon Coen and they are committed to fight racism with “venerating murderers and genocide perpetrators with statues and street names must stop”. So in other words they also want to get rid of literally hundreds of street names, embroidered with names of renowned Dutch East India officers, governors and traders.

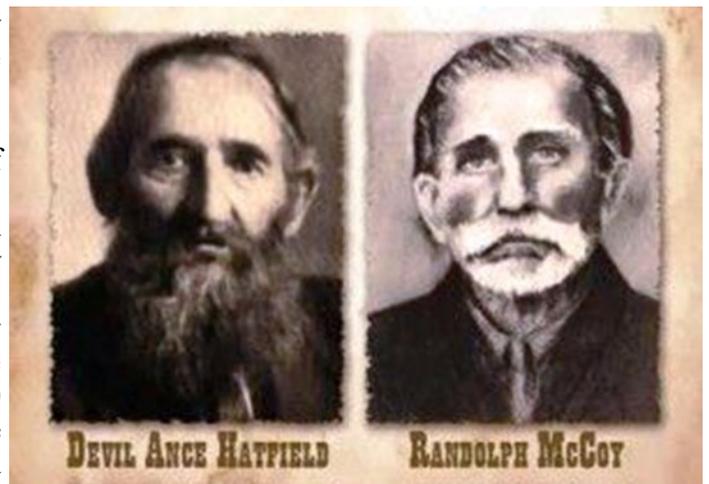
Now with ‘cancel culture’ and destroying of statues going full pelt, the statue of Jan Pietersz Coen is now imperiled once again and of course now many more others will have the wrath of the mob against them.

However glorious they believe their quest, in order to do it, they also must employ hundreds and thousands of minions to do this in their so called ‘righteous’ quest. Some of these people are often just layabouts, thugs and vandals, who just want to destroy things for that very sake.

For instance the Museum in Hoorn held an exhibit a few years ago to teach people about all sides of the debate and the sailor’s controversial past. At first the 2020 protest was peaceable, but then a large group of people made their way through the city centre to the statue and many of them were actually nothing to do with it, but what are known as ‘professional protesters’ who attach themselves to every protest, just to cause trouble.

Remember the old saying “He’s the real McCoy”. One of the meanings of the phrase went back to the old decades long feud between the McCoys and the Hatfields, where the two old comrades from the Civil War, became bitter enemies and McCoy actually employed really bad men to do the killing for them, like a guy called “Bad Frank”, where these men legally put on a sheriff’s badge, to murder people, so it is alleged that Hatfield actually said that a McCoy family member was the ‘real McCoy’, to denote that he was family and not just hired goon.

Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie, officially the United East India Company, but more commonly known as The Dutch East India Company was believed to be the biggest Company of all time. In fact when we convert the money that was earned then to nowadays, it is bigger than most Big Tech put together. It was the reason for the Dutch Golden Age of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and for great Admirals like Maarten Tromp, Michiel de Ruyter and great entrepreneurs. It was also the means of many men to escape from the slums and desperation of their lives and make their fortunes. There were hundreds and thousands of officers and workers of the Company and the fortunes of many were the fruits of their working. Not all of them were like Jan Pieterszoon Coen. The Company also produced the great explorers, scientists, artists, cartologists, sailors, soldiers, traders. In fact, if it hadn’t been for the VOC, the Dutch wouldn’t have discovered so much, including Terra Australis or New Holland as it was first known. In fact a Dutch trader had to be so much more than a good shopkeeper.



***“Devil” Ance Hatfield & Randolph McCoy, the 2 feuding patriarchs.  
Picture courtesy of Pinterest***

# THE VOCHS Bi-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## PUTTING STATUES ON TRIAL IN AN ERA OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

A Portuguese envoy observed that the Dutch were far more literate than his own countrymen. He reported that “there is not a cobbler in these parts who does not add French and Latin to his own language. The VOC produced men such as Nicolaes Witsen, the scholar statesmen of the VOC, who was a cartographer, maritime writer, sketcher, trader, scientist and even an authority on shipbuilding. (Actually a friend of Peter the Great). Nicolaes was not the only one. There were many more like him in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Portuguese, French, Spanish and Scandinavians all had their big trading companies in the east and west and the Dutch are not the only ones to have a big demerit against some of their traders. However that is the reason we study history, so that we learn from it and do not repeat the same mistakes. In Australia, the Paul Keating Government in the early 90s got rid of all the ancient and early modern histories in the universities, as their Treasurer, Dawkins pronounced emphatically that *History is a luxury we cannot afford*.

Therefore this put all the top lecturers in the histories redundant and the children are now the losers, through studying politics which has replaced



**Killing of James Cook  
Image from FACEBOOK**

history, to judge not on learned and balanced reading, but on following every crackpot on the internet, with a grudge against anyone. The “Me Too” movement also starts to judge everyone that they dislike. It’s a bit like the witch trials of Salem and Europe. Anyone who had an axe to grind against anyone would find a dozen “witnesses” that someone was a witch, especially some poor old woman on their own.

When I first studied history at university in the 1990s, in my first year I did a thesis on the Samurai and my lecturer, an American, said it was very good, but so judgmental. “You have to look at these men as men of their time, where death was preferable to dishonour. To be a good historian, you have to look at everyone of the time and what was the creed at that time and what was expected at the time.

Now there is no balanced judgment and the history dates are really ‘up the creek’. For instance they blame Cook for the 1<sup>st</sup> fleet, when it was actually Arthur Phillip with a few miserable convicts that landed on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1788. Cook was well before and actually got on well with natives, until his gruesome and savage death at the hands of the Hawaiians in his third voyage. Cook also never claimed the land, only the east coast, up to Cape York, for it was then known as New Holland. The rest, he put in his log “belonged to the Dutch navigators”. He never claimed the whole. As we know, Bass and Flinders in their



*Amsterdam receiving the tribute of four continents*

**VOC Chamber of Amsterdam  
enjoying the tribute of  
5 continents (frontispiece  
in C. R. Boxer's "The Dutch  
Seaborne Empire - 1600 -  
1800). Hutchinson of London)**

# THE VOCHS Bi-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## PUTTING STATUES ON TRIAL IN AN ERA OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

circumnavigation of Australia had orders to take off every Dutch name. Again, they missed quite a few. Those who judge statues, streets and place names should first judge themselves, not destroy, vandalise, fire and decimate so much. The criminals, vandals and thugs who get on the bandwagon of the so called 'righteous ones', should just go on with their own lives and let history belong to history. Are they any better through destroying and looting than any 'Jan Pietersz Coen' or anyone else judged criminal through modern eyes; those eyes which also have many beams in them.

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COOK



LINCOLN



COEN

## Anthony van Diemen

Trade and Exploration

By Monica de Knecht



**Antonio van Diemen  
Gouverneur Generaal  
van Nederlands  
Indiën, done in  
1725 by Dirk  
Jongman after  
Matthys Balen  
(National Gallery  
Portraits).**

Anthony van Diemen, although the Governor General of the VOC in Batavia, was mainly known for sending exploratory vessels down to the Great South Land, Terra Australis, especially in regard to the journeys of Abel Tasman. These were done with the auspices of the *Heeren XVII*. However, after his demise, the Directors were not at all interested in any exploratory surveys at all. Ships did land on the west coast afterwards, but it was only accidental, as they were always trade vessels wrecked there, like the *Vergulde Draeck* (Gilt Dragon), the *Zuytdorp* and the *Zeewijk*. He was also one of the most successful VOC officials, as he expanded Batavia and the Indies and was the means of shaping enormously Dutch influence in East Asia.

**BANKRUPT BUT NOT DOWN.** Van Diemen was born in Culemborg, the Netherlands in 1593. Although he was of the upper class, his family wished him to be a merchant. In 1616, aged 23, he set himself up in trade in Amsterdam, but as the result of bad advice, he was forced to declare bankruptcy. He could not repay his creditors, so turned to the VOC, who at first turned him down as a bad risk.

So Anthony adopted the alias, Thonisz Meeuwisz, enlisted as a soldier and arrived in Java in August 1618. He was noticed by no less than Governor General Jan Pieterszoon Coen, who appointed him as a clerk. In 1630, van Diemen married Maria van Aelst in Batavia. He had only adopted the alias to get into the Compagnie. As Coen had not known of his early disastrous history, his alias was scrapped and he was once more Anthony van Diemen. Coen appointed him Director of the commercial section of the VOC and in 1631, he returned with the fleet to Amsterdam as Admiral. In 1633, he sailed once again for the Dutch East Indies and on the way discovered an unknown island in the Indian Ocean which he called Nieuw Amsterdam (New Amsterdam), the name it still bears today.

**GOVERNOR GENERAL OF BATAVIA.** Jan Pieterszoon Coen died in 1629, at

the relatively young age of 42, worn out with his fanatical and ruthless quest for trade. Even though he wanted van Diemen to succeed him, the *Heeren XVII* had he ideas, so Jacques Specx and Hendrik Brouwer held the post, before van Diemen's ultimate succession on New Year's Day 1636. He was not only a worker for the compagnie, but a great fighter too; because at the end of the year, he sailed with a force to Amboyna and Ceram to put down a revolt and went to Makassar in an attempt to end the year's long fighting.

**FIRST AND FOREMOST KNOWN FOR HIS FOSTERING OF EXPLORATION.** He was brilliant in his signing of advantageous treaties, such as that with Aceh in Northern Sumatra and with Ternate and Tidore in the Moluccas, particularly in connection with the spice trade and establishment of power trading relations with China, Japan and Tonkin. (Northern region of Vietnam). However, we mainly think of this trading goliath in his efforts to foster exploration of the "Great South Land", *Terra Australis*. This resulted in the final and most ambitious Dutch voyages of the century. The first voyage under his auspices was undertaken within three months of his arrival in Batavia, starting from Cape York, the compagnie ships were to chart the unknown coasts, but it ended in failure, when the commander was killed by natives in New Guinea. In 1639, he commissioned



**Image of Abel Janszoon Tasman in the  
Australian Museum.**

## Anthony van Diemen

### Trade and Exploration

another two voyages to the north, in search of the “Gold and Silver islands” that Spanish reports placed in the North Pacific, to the east of Japan and sent Maarten Gerritsz Vries to explore the coasts of Korea and Tartaria; unfortunately another fruitless expedition. Undeterred van Diemen appointed Frans Visscher to draw up a plan for new discoveries. Visscher mapped out three different routes and van Diemen decided in August 1642, to send Abel Janszoon Tasman, accompanied by Visscher, in search of the Great South Land, which Tasman dubbed *Nieuw Holland* which name it was called for some time, by the British themselves as New Holland, until in the Bass and Flinders’ explorations, in the 1790s, it was changed to Australia, but New Holland still stuck for a while.

In November 1642, heading east from Mauritius on latitude 44 and missing the south coast of the Australian continent, Tasman sighted land at what is now the west coast of the island of Tasmania and followed the coastline along the southern shore and around to the east coast. Tasman sent a party ashore at Blackman Bay, on the Tasman Peninsula, who planted a flag and encountered a few native Tasmanian people. Because Abel

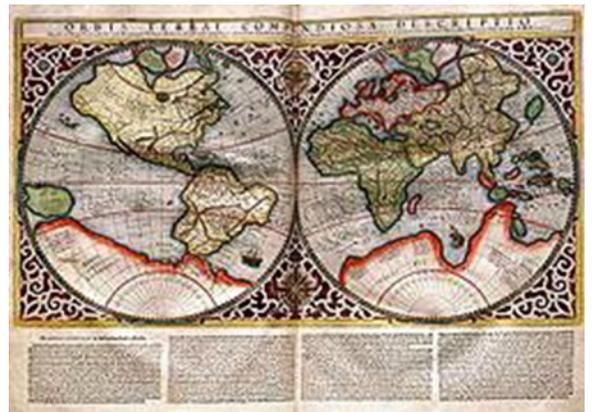


Image of Great Southern Land after Abel Tasman's explorations and discovery of Van Diemen's Land (now Tasmania).

Tasman believed that the area he had discovered was much larger, he christened it *Van Diemen's Land*, in honour of his patron.

The name "Van Diemen's Land" name was retained when British settlement began there in 1803. It became a byword for horror in England because of the severity of its convict settlements such as Port Arthur and Macquarie Harbour.

The name had acquired such odium that when it became a self-governing colony in 1855, one of the first acts of the new legislature was to change its name to Tasmania. "Tasmania is preferred, because 'Van Diemen's Land' is



associated among all nations with bondage and guilt" John West remarked at the opening of his *History of Tasmania* (Launceston: Dowling) 1852, vol I:4). But the old name lingered for many years—Tasmanians were referred to as Vandemonians until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Van Diemen is also commemorated in Van Diemen Gulf, on the coast of Northern Australia, where he commissioned a further voyage from Tasman in 1644. But he died in 1645 in Batavia. Because of his great success in trade, embassy and war for the Company, the VOC granted his wife a very large pension and she retired to the Netherlands.

His name is also found in the westernmost point of the North Island of New Zealand, Cape Maria van Diemen, named by Tasman in 1643 and by Maria Island off the east coast of Tasmania. It is one of only two geographical locations in New

**Terra Australis was first thought of in the 16th century, as a great land mass at the bottom of the world globe and also an arctic continent; as this 1570 map by Abraham Ortelius depicts, which is why James Cook was so disappointed on finding the east coast of New Holland as he mapped it. A place that had already been discovered by Dutch navigators. Image courtesy of Wikipedia**

## Anthony van Diemen

### Trade and Exploration

Zealand to have the name Tasman gave them.

**WHY NO EXPLORATION AFTER VAN DIEMEN?** So now we come to the gist of this thesis and that is why weren't the Directors of the VOC interested in exploration after van Diemen.

In some ways, I don't think the VOC was at all interested in exploration. For one thing, it cost too much, it may have cost too many lives and most of all ships and goods. After all trade was the reason for its inauguration in the first place – to unite all the small traders into one mega company, the VOC.

They may have been a little indulgent with van Diemen, as regards his 'moonlighting' into exploration, as if Coen founded Batavia, it was 're-born' under van Diemen as the very centre of company power and the very core of VOC administration. Van Diemen also built churches and introduced a legal code called the Batavian statutes (1642). He was second only to Coen in expanding the overseas trading empire of the Dutch, even though he was only Governor-General for 9 years.

**THE 2 GREAT DISAPPOINTMENTS AFTER VAN DIEMEN** Shortly before his death on 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1645, van Diemen called upon the Dutch Council of the Indies, to establish Cornelis van der Lijn as his successor.

The Seventeen Lords of the VOC had always decreed that after the death of a Governor-General, the Council should choose a 'provisional' Governor-General. Only once had the *Heeren XVII* agreed that the choice should actually come into force. They, at first, cancelled van Diemen's decision, but then afterwards did name

van der Lijn as his successor. Possibly because they hoped that this champion of trade would choose someone as capable as himself, so in 1646 Cornelis was officially named as Governor-General of Batavia. However, van der Lijn was a total disaster. He started very promisingly, signing peace treaties with Solor, Bantam and Mataram. With Mataram, he signed a largely trade agreement, the first of such contracts signed by the Dutch with Javanese rulers. It was sealed with severe regulations, which were re-inforced with strenuous measures to maintain the VOC trading monopoly, in the Moluccas. Rioting soon began and after a fierce struggle, the fortress at Kapaha on Thitu island (Hitu) was taken.

The *Heeren XVII* allowed van der Lijn, at his own request, to retire with honour on 7<sup>th</sup>

October, 1650. They then named, their choice, Carel Reyniersz, to take over Batavia. Cornelis van der Lijn left aboard the *Prinses Royaal* for the Netherlands. His reception was pretty icy and no reception and congratulations were given, traditions which were normally awarded to a returning fleet and its commander. On 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1650, Reyniersz was named his successor, a task he very much looked forward to and the seventeen gentlemen were also hoping that here would be a great successor to Coen and van Diemen. However four years later the VOC choice was dismissed by them. There still exists, in the Netherlands, his letter of dismissal. It indicates he was being dismissed, because he had been unable to carry out the duties of his office, particularly maintaining peace (the sort of *pax romanus* of the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*). The letter was never sent, because Reyniersz had already written to the Lords, asking to be relieved of his office, on health grounds. He died before their response reached him, on the night of 18/19<sup>th</sup> May, 1653. He was buried in Batavia, Dutch East Indies and was succeeded as Governor-General by Joan



**Cornelis van der Lijn - Governor General of the Dutch East Indies. Image courtesy Antique Arts and Maps.**

## Anthony van Diemen

### Trade and Exploration

Maetsuycker, a much more successful head of the Dutch East Indies. The colony in the Indies flourished under him. Under his rule, the Portuguese lost Ceylon (1658), the coast of Coromandel (1658) and Malabar (1663: Makassar was conquered (1667), the west coast of Sumatra was occupied and the first expedition to the interior of Java was held. He held the post until his death 25 years later in 1678.

Therefore we get a glimpse into what may have been in the *Heeren XVII's* minds as to why they never again allowed any of their Governor-Generals to engage into anything other than trade, embassies and trade wars. The success of van Diemen was accentuated in the failures of van der Lijn and Reyniersz. Joan Maetsuycker was a welcome relief, but was, himself, not interested much in exploration. The VOC was too much involved with building up their trade and the loss of Colonial Taiwan, not to mention trade wars with Britain.

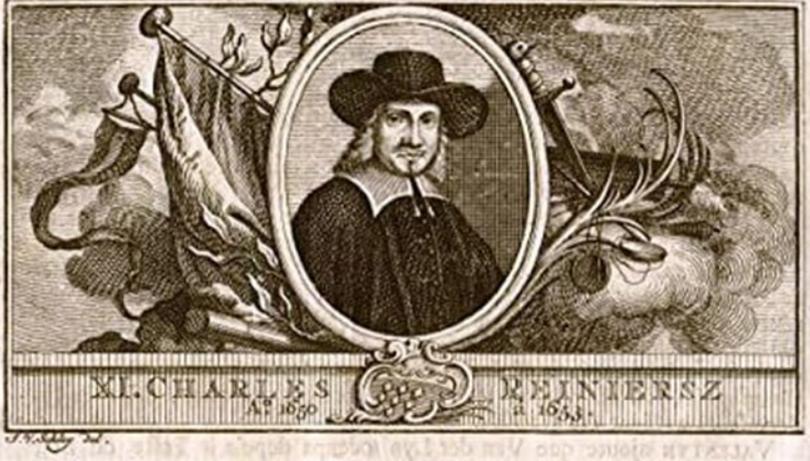
Van Diemen's rule encompasses one of the most eventful periods in Dutch overseas history. But both he and Jan Pieterszoon Coen strictly abided "to their rather dubious legal arguments than on their practised preference for

*The good old rule, the simple plan that they should take who have the power and they should keep who can.* But wasn't that the practice of every European trading company on the face of the earth, including the British East India Company.

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PLUS END NOTES.



**Charles (Carel) Reyniersz Governor General of the Dutch East Indies. Image courtesy Amazon - (Antique Arts and Prints).**

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## [ENGRAVED OSTRICH EGG - WHALING SCENE].

[Whaling scene engraved onto an ostrich egg, mounted on a 19th century, decorated metal stand].  
[The Netherlands?], [Base of the metal stand is dated:] 1827. ca. 23 cm. high.

€ 9,500

Remarkable engraved ostrich egg, mounted on a 19th century, decorated metal stand, showing a highly detailed whaling scene. The main scene depicts 4 large whales being hunted by people in several rowing boats and one smaller sail boat, coming from or accompanied by 3 large, three-masted vessels. The scene is set next to and just in front of a rugged coastline or possibly some large icebergs. The top of the egg is decorated with an engraved rosette, while a decorative border separates the upper two thirds of the egg, containing the whaling scene, from the lower third of the egg which is decorated with 4 fantastical mascarons and flowers.

Ostrich eggs have been made into luxury art pieces by painting or engraving them since antiquity and even earlier than that: the practice of engraving (or carving) ostrich eggshells can be traced back to approximately 60.000 years ago. The egg is signed "J.A." in the whaling scene, the inside/underside of the base of the metal stand contains an inscription: "1827".



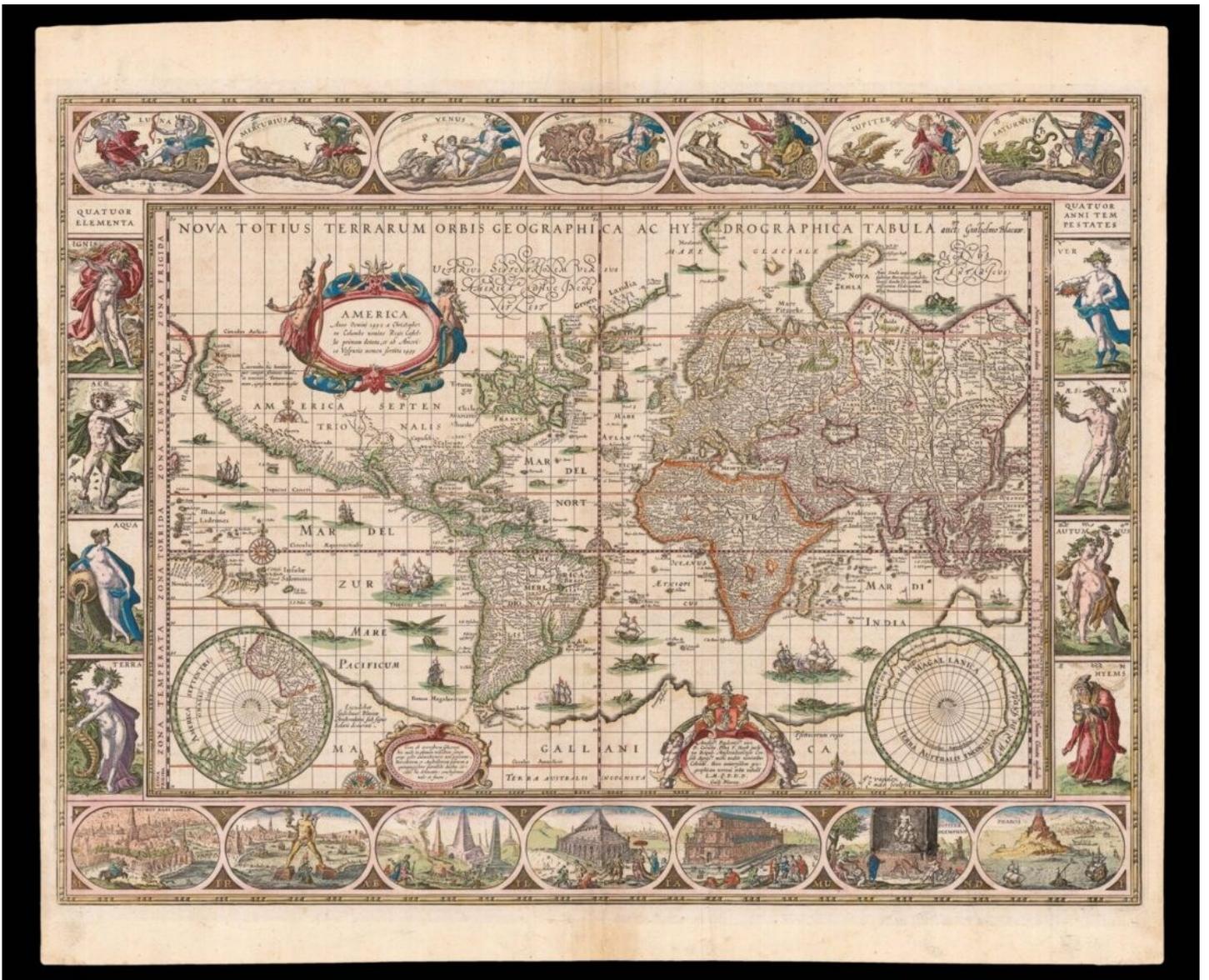
# THE VOCHS *Bi-MONTHLY* NEWSLETTER

*"One of the supreme examples of the map maker's art"*

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Nova totius terrarum orbis geographica ac hydrographica tabula.

By BLAEU, Willem Janszoon, 1631      £10,000



Blaeu's world map was first published separately in 1606 as a reduced version of his large world map of 1605. Its clarity, detail, and striking classical ornamentation makes it "one of the supreme examples of the map maker's art" (Shirley).

The map is shown on Mercator's projection with a massive southern continent attached to New Guinea, with the toponyms "Beach" and "Psittacorum region" taken from Marco Polo's travel memoirs. North America has the westward bulge characteristic of the time, with the "Strait of Anian" noted. Korea is shown as an island and Japan is in a kite-like shape.

# THE VOCHS *Bi-MONTHLY* NEWSLETTER

*“One of the supreme examples of the map maker’s art”*

The border of vignettes provide information on terrestrial and celestial cycles. The vertical borders contain allegorical representations of the four elements and the four seasons — they are linked by the zodiac symbols in each of the vignettes showing the seasons. The zodiac signs are arranged in their seasonal triplicities, which represent one element giving way to another: for example, the spring triplicity of Aries, Taurus and Gemini represents water becoming fire.

The upper border, as is fitting for its content, shows the “septem planeta”, including the sun and moon, as classical deities with their planetary symbols riding in chariots, suggesting their orbit. At the bottom are the seven wonders of the world: the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Colossus straddling the harbour at Rhodes, the Pyramids, the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus at Cairo, the Temple of Diana, the Statue of Jupiter and the lighthouse at Alexandria. Two small projections of the poles appear in each corner, there are three decorative cartouches, one concerning the discovery of North America.

The present example is the fourth state: “Terra del Fuego” is shown as an island; “Fretum le Maire” added to the bottom of South America; and the title changed to conclude “auct: Guiljelmo Blaeuw”.

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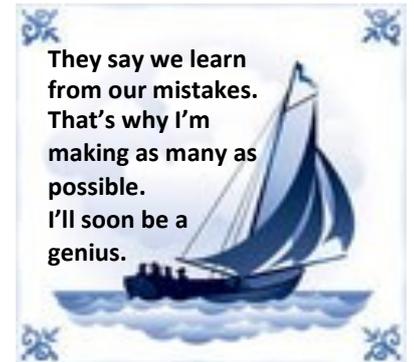
# THE VOCHS *Bi-MONTHLY* NEWSLETTER

## *From the Editor:*

Dear Members, Friends and Supporters of the VOCHS  
At last your newsletter—for Nov, Dec 2021 and Jan 2022.  
Hope you are all keeping as well as possible in these terrible times.  
Looks like we also have to contend with the newest virus .

Cheers  
Henny  
Secretary and Editor for the VOCHS

If you find any of our 'deliberate mistakes' in this newsletter please know that "Mistakes are lessons of Wisdom".



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