



The Holland Society of New York

May 20, 1996
442 Woodcrest Drive
Mechanicsburg, PA
17055-6810

Mr. Howard Knickerbocker
92 Sparrowbush Road
East Hartford, CT 06108

Dear Mr. Knickerbocker,

I have enclosed information on the Knickerbocker family you may or may not have seen already. This article was published in *De Halve Maen*, magazine of the Holland Society in 1972/73 and was written by Mr. Chase Viele. Chase is a member of the Holland Society and is President of our Buffalo, N.Y. area branch. According to Viele, it is thought by some that the name Knickerbocker was derived from Herman Janszen's supposed trade as a translation is Knikker(Marble) Bakker(baker).

I am preparing a directory of New Netherland settlers and enclose my page for the Knickerbocker family. Any additions and/or corrections would be appreciated.

Any male direct lineage descendant of Herman Janszen Knickerbocker is eligible for membership.

Sincerely,

David M. Riker
David M. Riker, Chairman,
Committee on Genealogy

Family Surname: Knickerbacker Immigrant: Herman Janszen Van Bommel
or patronymic Knickerbockers Ethnic Origin: Dutch Born: 1648
name

Native Town: , Friesland

Patronymic: Janszen

Approx. Arrival: 1674

Settled: Albany, N.Y., Schaghticoke, N.Y.

Died: after 1707

Married: 1678 Elizabeth, d/o Jan Louve Bogert

Children: (not necessarily in order of birth) Child.Patron.: Hermanszen

(1): Johannes, b. ; m. 9/27/1701 Anna, d/o Wouter Pieterszen Quackenbos. They
lived Schaatkooke, N.Y. Children: Lysbeth, Neeltie, Harman, Wouter, Cornelia,
Johannes

(2): Lourens, b. ; m. 1707 Marike Dyckman

(3): Evert, bp.9/3/1699 ; m. 1725 Geertry Vosburg

(4): Pieter, bp. 4/19/1702 Albany; m. 1725 Neeltjen Freer

(5): Cornelis, bp. 1/6/1692 Albany ; m. Johanna Schut

(6): Cornelia, bp. 7/21/1695 Albany

(7): Jannetje, b. ; m. Hendrick Lansing, Jr.

(8):

(9):

References

(a): Sketches of Allied Families, Knickerbacker-Viele, Microfiche G-1396

(b): The Knickerbacker Family by Anna Rice 1912- Microfiche G-2359

(c): Rec. Vol. 39, p. 33, p. 116, p. 179, p. 277; Vol. 40 p. 55, p. 101

(d): De Halve Maen, Magazine of the Holland Society, Vol. xlvii, Nos.3,&4 Oct. 1972

(e): PA, p. 69

(f): The Knickerbockers of Upstate New York, by C. Viele (reprint De Halve Maen)

(g):

(h):

(i):

The Knickerbockers of Upstate New York

by
Chase Viele



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The Knickerbockers of Upstate New York: I.

by Chase Viele, Essayist, Biographer and Historian.

Family whose original Knickerbocker name Washington Irving made famous, produced eminent men, built mansion.

A PROMINENT early member and trustee of the Holland Society, General Egbert L. Viele (1825-1902), can be credited today with setting the record straight nearly a century ago on the origins and significance of the family name of Knickerbocker, which by then (1876) had come to be considered by the public merely legendary in its association with the Dutch history and traditions of New York State.

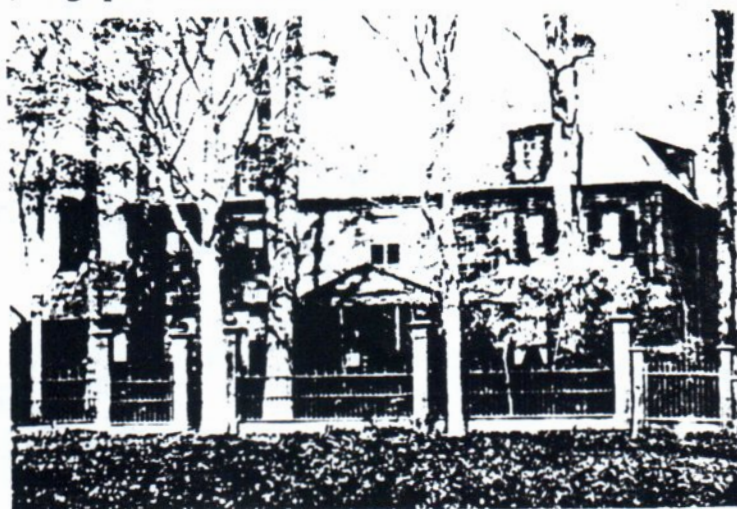
In an illuminating and charmingly illustrated article entitled "The Knickerbockers of New York Two Centuries Ago," appearing in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* for December, 1876, Gen. Viele sought to clarify the background of the name Knickerbocker once and for all. And well qualified he was to undertake this task as his mother, Kathlyne Schuyler Knickerbocker (baptized Cathalyntje), was born a member of the real family in the ancient family *hofsted*, or homestead, at Schaghticoke, Rensselaer County, about twenty-five miles northeast of Albany, later made famous by the American author Washington Irving.

The annals of the Holland Society contain many speeches and papers delivered by Gen. Viele at annual dinners and civic observances. A favorite topic of his was the spread of the Dutch influence upon America, as instanced by the eloquent address he delivered at Schenectady on February 8, 1890 where he represented the Society at the Bicentennial commemoration of the 1690 massacre of colonists by the French and Indians. In addition to Gen. Viele's paternal descent from a Cornelis Volkertszen (Velius) who emigrated from Hoorn in North Holland to New Amsterdam about 1638, his maternal descent from the Knickerbocker family was a source of particular pride to him, as witness his carefully researched *Harper's* article.

Still standing today, the family mansion upstate is now an historic site, owned and maintained by the Knickerbocker Historical Society, Inc. of the small rural community of Schaghticoke. Open to public visitation, the brick and timber building has been partially restored, largely through donated materials and volunteer labor. Its many large rooms have been furnished mainly with donated antiques, appropriate to the period of its construction and long occupancy by the family. In addition, some of the *original* furniture, turned over to the Albany Institute of History and Art for safe keeping before the family finally vacated the mansion years ago, has been returned on an extended loan basis, thus providing exceptional authenticity to many of the rooms.

A Knickerbocker family legend, passed down through successive generations to the present Mrs. John Knickerbocker of Ballston Spa, N. Y., owner today of much of the remaining antique furniture, silver and portraits once housed in the mansion, alleges that Washington

CHASE VIELE, University of Buffalo '57, is the author of many published articles on historical topics and has in preparation a biography of Gen. Egbert Viele, his great-grand-uncle. Connected with numerous historical and patriotic societies, he is a grandson of Sheldon T. Viele, historian of the Holland Society's first "Meeting in Holland" in 1888.



Courtesy of the Author

Built in early 18th century and reconstructed in 1770 this "hofsted," pictured in 19th century photo, was continuously occupied by the Knickerbocker family from 1708-1946.

Irving actually wrote a portion of his celebrated *Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York* while seated at a desk in the parlor. A spry octogenarian possessing a memory steeped in family lore, Mrs. Knickerbocker and her late husband, for sixty years a devoted member of the Holland Society, owned and occupied the Schaghticoke mansion until 1946, at which time it was sold to a local farmer.

Built on land uninterruptedly held by the Knickerbocker family from 1708 until 1946, some original portions of the mansion's interior date from the early 18th century. Completely reconstructed in 1770 to a Flemish design including "Dutch" bricks and mortar, a steep-pitched roof and quaint carvings around the doorway portico, alterations made in the 19th century have unfortunately obscured some of its original charm and character. The many wooden outbuildings and Dutch-style barns once surrounding the place, seen in early prints and photographs, disappeared long ago. A wooden "peace gate" with a dove at its pinnacle once stood near the main entrance, according to a 19th century photograph; it was said to commemorate an overnight visit by the Marquis de Lafayette during his triumphal tour of the nation in 1825.

The four-poster bed in which Lafayette slept is in use today in Mrs. John Knickerbocker's Ballston Spa home. Another cherished possession in her home is the Dutch grandfather's clock which stood in the Schaghticoke mansion for some 175 years. Made in Holland in 1632, it still tells the hour faithfully and depicts upon its face all the phases of the moon.

In 1967 an exhaustive professional architectural study of the mansion was made for the New York State Council on the Arts by a well known restoration consultant; however, owing to lack of funds little has been done to implement the recommendations made. Little more than a decade ago when bulldozers threatened the building, as reported in a brief account in *de Halve Maen* for January 1960, a community-wide effort in Schaghticoke and nearby rural localities produced the necessary funds to secure options to purchase, thus

taking the first step toward ensuring its preservation for future generations. Subsequently a dedicated historical group of local townspeople and farmers, operating without subsidy or private foundation support, managed to purchase the property and surrounding land in 1966. A substantial mortgage still remains to be liquidated before plans for restoration may be considered.

General Viele, a West Point graduate in 1847 who achieved distinction in the Civil War and later became a prominent civil and sanitary engineer in New York City, early in life developed a strong interest in his colonial heritage. Born at Waterford, a short distance from Schaghticoke, he was early imbued with the legends and lore of the ancestral home where his mother was born in 1792. His father, John L. Viele, a well known attorney and orator in the Waterford and Troy area, became a State Senator, Judge of the New York State Court of Errors, and a Regent of the University of the State of New York.

As "Engineer-in-Chief" of the projected Central Park in 1856-58, Viele developed a design for the 843-acre site which was later closely followed by Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted in their winning design, "Greensward." His plans and schemes for mass transportation, such as the sub-surface Arcade Railway (1872) and the elevated Girdle Railway (1868), his published theories and methods for controlling New York's then troublesome drainage and sanitation problems, and his monumental Hydrographic and Topographical Map of Manhattan (1865) are among his contributions to the city's municipal growth. He served as president of the New York Parks Commission and later as a Democratic Representative in Congress in the '80s, and pioneered in advancing the Harlem River Ship Canal, an important adjunct to development of the upper West Side. In his booklet "The West End Plateau of the City of New York" (1879), he pointed out that area's many advantages and foresaw its rapid growth.

Dr. Albert Fein, Director of Urban Studies at Long Island University, and author of a biography of Frederick Law Olmsted published this year in observance of the sesquicentennial of the landscapist's birth, stated recently that Viele as scientist, engineer and planner had revealed in his work an understanding of the environment that came very close to that of the ecologist in our own day. Dr. Fein believes that Viele was far ahead of his time in his concepts of rapid transportation and double decking of streets, for example, and his concern about the city's lack of open park area and breathing space.

General Viele's life-long association with the Hudson Valley, so closely related to his birth, education and long identification with the municipal development of New York City, no doubt served to inspire the large and distinctive Egyptian pyramid tomb he had erected for himself in the Post Cemetery of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Surely few military tombs in America can rival its bold and commanding presence.

Noting in his 1876 *Harper's* article on the Knickerbockers that "this now universal patronymic belongs to one of those ancient Dutch families who, as long ago as the seventeenth century, were large proprietors in the fertile valleys of the Upper Hudson," Gen. Viele traced the newer usage of the name, popularized by

Washington Irving, back to its origins in this country. He also described a number of the some twenty-five rooms of the mansion, their furnishings and appointments as well as the negro slave servants and their winter living quarters in the cavernous basement, and the fortress-like nature of the building itself.

Regarding the latter, Gen. Viele commented:

Life at Schaghticoke was for many years like an armed reconnaissance. The lurking savage was always on the look-out for a victim, and the subtle Canadian ever conspiring for an attack.

He also observed:

The home we are endeavoring to describe is situated in the very channel through which the tide of battle ebbed and flowed that for nearly two centuries swept up and down the great natural pathway to the Canadas. Everywhere the relics of war can still be found, and the traditions of those terrible days are still repeated around the winter fireside. The beautiful valley of Schaghticoke was a *point d'appui* through all those years of incessant toil.

However, life at Schaghticoke had its lighter and merrier moments. The Knickerbackers were known for their characteristic Dutch hospitality and the mansion was often the scene of social entertainments attended by neighboring landholders for miles around. Gen. Viele's own recollections are vividly told:

An unbounded hospitality exhibited itself in all the appointments of the dwelling. The massive old sideboard was always supplied with tempting viands, and the dish of olecocks and krullers was never allowed to be empty. The introduction of slaves from the West Indies, while it aided greatly to lighten the burden of labor, had a social aspect in the musical element which was thereby added, one or more violinists being thus always easily obtained, giving an additional zest to the numerous entertainments.

The Schaghticoke mansion and the Knickerbocker family became famous early in the 19th century as a result of the popularity of a noted work of literature. Irving's *Knickerbocker's History*, published in 1809, immortalized the name in the minds of Americans of his generation. Thereafter, the name Knickerbocker became synonymous with "old New York" and eventually was associated with the names of firms, organizations, institutions, products and athletic teams, both in New York City and throughout the state. Although Diedrich, or "Father Knickerbocker," as he came to be known, was a figment of Irving's imagination, he alludes frequently in the introduction to his book to the *real* Schaghticoke Knickerbackers, interweaving the factual with the fanciful.

The actual family from whom the legend grew originated in Friesland, a province of northwestern Holland. Herman Jansen Knickerbocker, founder of the family in America, settled near Fort Orange (Albany) in about 1674. On December 11, 1682, he contracted with one Anthony Van Schaick to purchase land at the "Halve Maen," a fork of land where the Mohawk River enters the Hudson above Albany. The old spelling of the name, both as "Harme Janse kinneker Backer" and "Herman Jansen van Wyekyckacke," is found on the deed, still on file at the Albany county clerk's office, countersigned by Robert Livingston, Secretary of Albany County. Herman Jansen's signature is found on other documents as Herman Jansen van Bommel, the

latter being a place-name in Holland. Some say his alternative use of names was due to a supposed trade; however, a literal translation of *knikker* (marble) and *bakker* (baker) produces "marble baker" which seems none too plausible. Many attempts by experts over the years have not produced a really satisfactory translation.

Herman Jansen was born in Friesland province in 1648, a son of Johannes van Berghen. He entered the Dutch navy and served under Admirals Van Tromp and De Ruyter during the Netherlands period of naval victories over England. He was severely wounded at the Battle of Solebay, June 6, 1672, where Dutch warships were attacked by the combined English and French fleets off the coast of England. Following his emigration to Fort Orange, he married the daughter of Dr. Myndert Hermance van de Bogert of Dutchess County, ex-surgeon of the Dutch ship *Eendracht*, whom Governor Peter Stuyvesant had appointed commissary general of Fort Orange. On his maternal side, Herman Jansen Knickerbacker hailed from the Jansen family of Masterlandt, and was a kinsman of Roelof Jansen, who had come from Holland as a farmer for Kiliaen van Rensselaer's patroonship as early as 1630.

Lands in the vicinity of Schaghticoke, originally the home of Mohican Indians, became by the late 17th century, after a series of long inter-tribal wars, the location of a tribe which came to be known as the Skatecooks, resulting in the area's early designation as the "Schaahtecogue Tract" by the Dutch. Schaghticoke (pronounced Skat-e-coke) is derived from an Algonquin Indian word signifying "meeting of the waters," since in this region the waters of the Hoosick and Tomhannock Rivers meet in a circular, fertile valley surrounded by hills.

The vale formed by the confluence of the two rivers and the surrounding hills has for 300 years been known as the "Vale of Peace," from a treaty of peace and welfare concluded there in 1676 at the end of King Philip's War, a bitter struggle between a coalition of southern New England tribes and the various English colonies. A famed oak tree, known as the "Tree of Peace" or "Witenagemot Oak," which was to grow to 20 feet in circumference and live for 272 years, was planted in this historic vale the same year to commemorate the treaty.

Located about 100 yards from the later site of the Knickerbacker Mansion, the sturdy oak took its name from the Witenagemot (Saxon for "Assemblage of the Wise") which met there, consisting of the Board of Indian Commissioners headed by Governor Edmund Andros and his councillors and judges, backed by the militia, with a stately array of sachems and nearly a thousand warriors of the Indian tribes. Here, where once was located an Indian village known as the "Sachtekook," this first Council of Christians met with the sachems Soquon and Maquon after the Hoosacs' victory over the Mohawks and other tribes ended the war.

Prayers were offered by Jesuit Fathers as well as the Dutch Dominie Schaets and Nicholas van Rensselaer of Albany, followed by the ceremonial smoking of the calumet or pipe of peace. The oak was planted not only to confirm the new link of friendship between Mohawk and Hoosac and allied tribes, but to strengthen the alliance of Fort Albany militia with their river Indian scouts scattered through New England, New York and

New France. It is said to be the only "Vale of Peace" on this continent where the "Witenagemot" has ever assembled for the Indian's welfare. It is noteworthy that three major powers were represented at this Council: England, Holland and France. The great oak lived until uprooted by a flood of the Hoosick River on December 30, 1948. Saplings taken from the original oak have sprung into sturdy trees nearby.

When Governor Thomas Dongan gave the City of Albany its charter in 1686 he inserted therein a clause empowering the Common Council,

Att their pleasure to purchase from these Indians at Schaahtecogue the quantity of Low or Meadow land lying at a certyne place called and known by the name of Schaahtecogue.

Although this grant of authority to Mayor Pieter Schuyler and the common council of Albany to acquire five hundred acres of land in the "Schaahtecogue Tract," was dated July 22, 1686, the city did not immediately take advantage of the privilege. Twelve years later, however, Governor Benjamin Fletcher granted Hendrick van Rensselaer of Fort Crailo a patent for a tract "by Skachkook's creek" six miles wide and extending six miles to the Hudson River. As these lands were found to include portions of the tract already controlled by Albany, van Rensselaer conveyed his patent to the city the following year. Later, in 1707, the City of Albany finally exercised its charter privilege and acquired all of the lands known as the "Schaahtecogue Tract," totalling 36 square miles, through payment to the local Hoosac Indians of "two blankets, two coats, twenty shirts, two guns, twelve pounds of powder, eight gallons of rum, two casks of beer, two rolls of tobacco, Madeira wine, gin, etc."

The deed to this tract—"2 by 2 by 12 by 14 miles in extent"—was secured from the Hoosac sachem Soquon by Mayor David Schuyler of Albany on February 28, 1707. At the same time Herman Jansen Knickerbacker of Albany, acting on his own behalf, negotiated with the venerable Soquon for the Indian deed to adjacent land known as Witenagemot Manor, west of the ancient channel of Tomhannock Creek and south of the Hoosac River. Both the Knickerbacker and Schuyler tracts were confirmed by Queen Anne in December, 1707.

The City of Albany in 1708, being then in legal possession of the Schaghticoke tract, thereupon advertised its availability for settlement by posting a notice on the doors of the city's Dutch Reformed Church, advising —

These are to give notice that of the Lands Belonging to the City of Albany Called Sachtekook, Eight Plantations on ye South Side of ye Creek are to be Let to farm, Each containing five and twenty morgans of fifty acres Low Land and five morgans up Land; if therefore any Person or Persons be Inclined to farm any of ye Sd Plantations may apply themselves to Commonalty of ye Sd City at ye City hall of ye Sd City on ye 10 of July next at one a Clock in the afternoon when and where ye Sd Conditions how ye Sd Plantations are to be Lett Shall be made known unto them.

Johannes Harmense Knickerbacker I, eldest son of Herman Jansen, leased one of the first farms or "plantations" in the Schaghticoke tract in 1709. He was not one of the eight, out of the original twenty applicants of July 10, 1708 who participated in a drawing for

the "Eight Billets for ye Eight Plantations," but in the minutes of the Albany common council of October 8, 1709 he is included among those eight settlers receiving indentures and who "on ye 8th. inst were at Scaaktekook in order to lay out your hoffsteads for ye severall Tenants and to giv ym their proportion of land according to a minute made in Common Council of ye 13th. of December last." Johannes had assumed the claim of Cornelis van Buren, one of the eight original applicants, when he gave it up.

In the lease, or indenture, given by Mayor Evert Bancker on October 13, 1709 to "Johannes Knickerbacker of the manner of Renslaerwyck miller" he received from Albany "30 morgens," about sixty acres, and contracted to pay an annual quit-rent to the City of Albany of "16 pounds and 10 shillings" to be rendered in "37½ bushels of good merchantable winter wheat." The indenture, signed by Evert Bancker and "J. K. Backer," referred to the latter's occupation as that of a miller doubtless because of his sawmill at Schaghticoke where boards for the first home in Schaghticoke were cut.

Thus, Johannes became a founder of what was to be known as the "Knickerbacker Colony," consisting of eight Albany families of Dutch extraction. According to an ably researched study of the Knickerbacker, Viele and related families published in 1916 by Kathlyne K. Viele, these families were respectively headed by Johannes Cuyler, Johannes de Wandelaer, Jr., Barent Gerritse, Daniel Ketelhuyn, Cornelis van Buren (who dropped) out and was replaced by Knickerbacker), Dirk van der Heyden, Korset Vedder and Johannes Harmense Vischer.

(To be continued)

Editor's Corner

It is a pleasure to call attention to the article in this issue by Chase Viele, of Buffalo, N. Y., of a family connected with the Society for many years. The author, who is also a direct descendant of Johannes Knickerbacker, III, one-time owner of the mansion at Schaghticoke, N.Y., writes about a Dutch family whose name Washington Irving immortalized as Knickerbocker, and a region where Vieles also settled in the early 18th century along with other Albany families of Holland origin, such as those named Kipp, Groesbeck, Quackenbush, Schuyler, Vandenberg, Van Vechten and Winne.



The "Hofstead" of Col. Johannes Knickerbacker, 1st, Manor of Old Schaghticoke. The Munston was built by Col. Johannes Knickerbacker, 2d, in 1770, and the huge Dutch-roofed barns after the Revolution.

II.

Schaghticoke group joined in 1709 by Louwis Viele, grandson of Hoorn merchant in New Netherland Company of 1614.

AMONG the settlers who in 1709 joined the "Knickerbacker Colony" in opening up the wilderness region about Schaghticoke in present Rensselaer County, some 25 miles northeast of Albany, was Louwis Viele, great-great grandfather of Gen. Egbert L. Viele. A native of Schenectady, he was the son of Pieter Cornelison Viele (1648-1685), a Schenectady land-holder, and a grandson of Cornelis Volkertszen (Velius) who came to New Amsterdam about 1638 from Hoorn, Holland.

The indenture to Viele from Mayor Bancker of Albany for one of the eight "plantations" at Schaghticoke was given October 13, 1709, the same date as the one given Knickerbacker:

Evert Banker Mayor etc to Louwis Pieterse Viele of Shinnechtady;-- Land in City of Schaaktekook 15 morgans, bounded E and W by Schaakkook's creek, W by Creek called Tamhenick's Kill, S by lot of Johannis Vischer; and also 5 morgans bound W. by Tanhanick's Kill E by 5 morgans belonging to Johannis Hermense Vischer N by Mudder Kill, E by a ridge and runs back southward between said ridge and the hofstead till it takes in 10 morgans.

his
(Signed) EVERT BANCKER LOUIS V VIELE
mark

Earlier, following the massacre and destruction of Schenectady in February 1690, Louwis Viele and his mother, Jacomyntje Swart, had moved to Ulster County and while there he married, at Kingston, on October 12, 1697, Marie Freer of New Paltz. She was the daughter of Hugo Freer, a French Huguenot and one of the twelve original patentees of New Paltz. His dwelling, a stone house on Huguenot Street, still stands today and is preserved by his descendants as a historic site. Louwis and his wife later returned to Schenectady.

With the settlement at Schaghticoke in 1709 of both Knickerbackers and Vieles, there began the long association between these two Dutch families which was to ensue for a century and a half. The families became closely inter-married, eventually resulting in a "clan" which extended through the nearby countryside for many a mile.

There are parallels found in the Netherlands background and emigration to the New World of the two families first represented at Schaghticoke by Louwis and Johannes. Louwis' uncle, Aernoudt Cornelissen Viele (1640-1704), achieved considerable fame in his lifetime as an explorer, Indian interpreter and negotiator between Indian tribes and colonial officials. For about 30 years, through at least 1696, Viele was the chief interpreter and mediator between the Indians and the English in New York Province. It is recorded that in August, 1676, he served in this twofold capacity for Governor Andros and a deputation of Indians, quite possibly at the famed conference of the Witenagemot at Schaghticoke.

To attend the Onondaga Council of April 1690, after the Schenectady massacre, Jacob Leisler sent Viele



Courtesy of the Author
Gen. Egbert L. Viele (1825-1902), a descendant of Louwis Viele, was a Civil War veteran, prominent civil engineer in this city, and Holland Society trustee from 1898-1902.

(who had lost five of his family in the massacre) as the sole representative of the English, and much is recorded of his forensic skills among the divergent groups who met before the council fire. In this conference at Onondaga Castle, Jesuit Fathers from Canada as well as French officers were present and Viele, equal to his charge as the English diplomat, hung beside the northerners' belt the distinctive belt of "Brother Corlear" (a word derived from the name of Arent van Curler, c.1600-1667, a Dutchman greatly esteemed by the Indians, that had come to designate the English governors), so the councillors could not call his message "an empty word."

Referring to the Mohawk and Hoosac scouts situated at Skeetcook and Skatecook on the Hoosac, Viele said: "They are well placed and a good guard; they are our children and we shall take care that they do their duty." The conference did not result, however, in a firm alliance between the Iroquois nations and the English as was hoped.

The Volkertszen (Viele) association with the New World may be said to have begun with the year 1613, considerably earlier than their later kinsmen the Knickerbackers. In 1613, only four years after Hudson's voyage, a Cornelis Volkertszen (grandfather of Louwis), merchant, book-maker and bookseller of Hoorn, was part-owner of the ship *Fortuyn* which on a voyage to America under command of Captain Cornelis Jacobszen May touched upon Long Island in the vicinity of what is now Montauk Point. In 1614, Volkertszen and two other owners of the *Fortuyn* were granted a charter by the States General as the "New Netherland Company," giving exclusive trading rights and permitting four voyages over a period of three years, commencing January 1, 1615.

A few years later Cornelis and his brother, Dr. Dirck Volkertszen, also of Hoorn, were among the petitioners to the States General for permission to send a trading

ship to the Virginias provided the vessel return home before July 1, 1622. This terminal date is understandable as, that same year (1621), the Dutch West India Company was organized and received in its charter a monopoly of trade along the shores of the Americas for 24 years.

The new company founded New Netherland, including New Amsterdam and, in 1624, the first settlement at Fort Orange (Albany); it would also deprive Volkertszen and other merchants of a lucrative living. Cornelis probably emigrated to New Netherland in the 1630's; however, as a surname Volkertszen, or Viele, cannot be documented until 1639 when the New Amsterdam records show that he made a loan, receiving a note of "thirty-two Carolus guilders" from one Hans Janse van Rotterdam. In 1644 Cornelis was one of the burghers of New Amsterdam who selected the board of Eight Men to safeguard the interests of the community, one of the first moves toward popular representation in Dutch colonial government.

Hollanders of the 17th century generally did not have, or did not use, family names as we know them today. Usually the Christian name preceded the father's name with its genitive ending (or patronymic), which was often followed by a third name relating either to occupation or locality, present or past. Some chose not to use consistently their multiple names; often parts of names were omitted, depending upon the purpose or occasion. Cornelis Volkertszen's (1574-1648/9) full name was Cornelis Volkertszen Seylemaecker (sailmaker.)

His elder brother, Dr. Dirck Volkertszen (1572-1630), was additionally known as Dr. Theodorus Velius (Latin equivalent of the Dutch name) and sometimes Dr. Dirck Volkertszen Velius. Cornelis and Dirck were sons of Volkert Martense Seylemaecker (1542-1618) and Anna Dirks of Medemblik. It was Volkert who dropped what had been the family name of Schaghen and adopted the occupational name Seylemaecker after settling in Hoorn, a port city on the Zuider Zee.

Dirck became a man of considerable learning for that period, an historian, poet and physician. His best known book, *Chronyk van der Staat Hoorn*, went into several editions, the last appearing in 1740. He was the first to change the family vernacular name of Seylemaecker into its Latin form of Velius, according to the 17th century custom among those who acquired or affected learning or frequented the universities. Some other members of the family, during this same period, changed the name Seylemaecker to its Greek equivalent, "Carbassius." Cornelis was less regular and consistent than the doctor in using his third name, Velius.

Baptismal records of the Dutch Reformed Church in New Amsterdam (New York) show that Cornelis and his second wife, Marie Du Trieux, became the parents of three sons and a daughter after 1640. They were: Aernoudt Cornelison, baptized May 27, 1640, died c.1704; Cornelis Cornelison, baptized February 5, 1643, died c.1690; Jacomintje, baptized August 20, 1645; Pieter Cornelison, baptized February 9, 1648, died in 1685. Each of the three sons adopted a third name, according to the Dutch custom, but in each case altered the Latin form Velius to either Veilen, Vilen, Veily or Viele. All four are found on documents and records in the places where they settled, New Amsterdam, Albany and Schenectady.

Within a generation the spelling Viele was to be-

come the most accepted form. Louwis Viele, son of Pieter Cornelison, had used that spelling consistently while a resident of both Schenectady and New Paltz, prior to settling at Schaghticoke in October, 1709. Miss Kathlyne Knickerbacker Viele (1853-1924), Gen. Egbert L. Viele's elder daughter and historian and genealogist of the Knickerbacker and Viele families, is credited with discovering, in 1913, the 1639 reference in the New Amsterdam records to Cornelis Volkertszen's loan, and subsequent family baptisms while searching through records of the Old Dutch Reformed Church in New York. She then established the chain of documented connection, through later travel and research in Holland, with the Cornelis Volkertszen of Hoorn.

Since, prior to the establishment of the "Knickerbacker Colony" in 1709 the threat of war and frequent raids by hostile Indians and French from northern New York and Canada had created a barrier to further colonization of these lands, it was decided to erect a stockade in the area. Upon the approach of Queen Anne's War, the colonial governor of New York, Lord Cornbury, directed Secretary Robert Livingston to build "Fort Schaghticoke" in the early spring of 1703 on the "Great Meadow," a mile east of the Witenagemot Oak, or Council Tree, later the site of the Knickerbacker Mansion.

Within a few years, Cornbury and his Council recognized an urgent need for a strong leader to head a colony of Dutch tenantry from Albany and locate in Schaghticoke, not only to secure the region but to Christianize the Hoosacs and Mohawks. Hence the negotiation between Mayor David Schuyler of Albany and the Hoosac sachem Soquon for the deed to the "Schahtecogue Tract," acquired on February 28, 1707.

A stalwart leader was indeed found in Johannes Knickerbacker I, who became, after 1709, Captain and later Colonel of the local militia regiment at Fort Schaghticoke, a position also held by his son Col. Johannes Knickerbacker II, later a hero of the American Revolution who was severely wounded at the Battle of Saratoga in October, 1777.

That Johannes and the other Dutch colonists brought Christianity to their new surroundings is evident in the establishment in 1714 of the first Dutch Church of Old Schaghticoke under the auspices of the Classis of Amsterdam. In a log meeting-house near the Louwis Viele homestead, services in the Dutch language were conducted until 1746 when it was burned by Ontario Indians during King George's War. The church was soon rebuilt, and Domine Theodorus Frelinghuysen of the Albany Dutch Church preached there on a quarterly visitational basis until 1759.

The Knickerbacker family Bible of Johannes I, which contains birth, marriage and death records in Dutch commencing with the year 1721 — a leather-bound volume with brass corners printed in Holland in 1714 — is reportedly the only extant copy of that edition in New York State. Used in this house of worship until 1759, the Bible is thought to be in possession of the family of the late Charles Knickerbacker Winne, Jr., M.D., of Albany, a descendant of Johannes III. Dr. Winne, until his death in 1964, served many years as Vice President of the Holland Society for Albany County. The Winne family was connected, through many marriages, with both the Knickerbacker and Viele families.

In the second Dutch meeting house at Schaghticoke, built in 1760 and modeled after the Dutch Reformed Church in Albany, the sacred desk was long graced by the family Bible of Johannes II, printed in Holland in 1741; it is now in the New York State Library at Albany. Below the pulpit, which was mounted on a high pedestal, stood the *voorlezer's* desk and in front of that was the communion table. A large silver plate, in use for generations at that table along with the hand-wrought communion vessels, is today in Mrs. John Knickerbacker's home. In the form of a memorial to the memory of Herman Knickerbacker (1709-1768), a brother of Col. Johannes Knickerbacker II and who was long a deacon and elder of the church, it bears the following circular inscription:

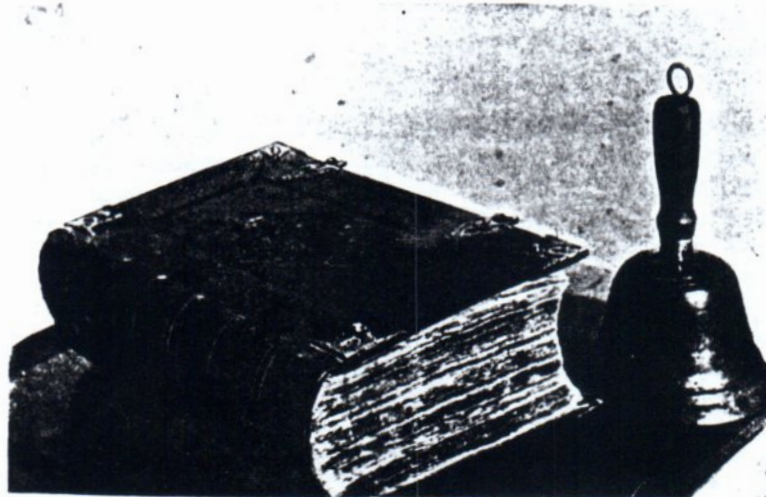
Eene Gedagtenis van Herman Knickerbacker die is overleden op den Sept A. D. 1768 Out Synde 8 en 50 jaren 8 maanden ende 18 dagen. (In remembrance of Herman Knickerbacker who died in September, A.D. 1768, at the age of 58 years, 8 months and 18 days.)

In each succeeding generation of Knickerbackers the eldest son appears to have assumed, upon the death of his father, the office of Deacon then later in life that of Elder. There was dignity and responsibility attached to these offices in the Dutch Church.

A third Knickerbacker family Bible, once thought to have been the property of the original Herman Jansen Knickerbacker, was printed in Holland in 1682. It is a specimen of the craft of Hendrik and Jacob Keur of Dordrecht and bears the date — "Ac.c-1c LXXXII." It contains hand-written family records in Dutch but, according to an account of the Bibles by the late Miss Kathlyne Knickerbacker Viele, a tireless family historian, this latter Bible was actually purchased in Holland in the mid-19th century by a family member who then made the written entries in Dutch. This Bible is thought to be in the possession of a member of the family upon whose death it will go, by a previous bequest, to the New-York Historical Society.

Also of interest was the hand-bell or *kerkklockje*, seen in numerous early photographs, that called the burghers of Schaghticoke to service at the Old Dutch Church, and undoubtedly the church-bell used at the first frame church built in the Hoosac Valley in colonial times. By the end of the 18th century, services conducted in Schaghticoke's Dutch Church gradually began to relax the rigid adherence to the Dutch language in favor of English.

(To be continued)



The Family Bible of Col. Johannes Knickerbacker, 2d, printed in Holland in 1741. The Hand-bell was used to call the burghers of the Vale of Peace to service at the Old Dutch Church. It is undoubtedly the first church-bell used at the first frame church built in Hoosac Valley during Colonial Days.

III.

Prospering as landowners, and active in public life, Knickerbacker family was well known to Washington Irving.

ACCORDING to an oft-told family story, Herman Knickerbacker II (1779-1855), Gen. Egbert L. Viele's uncle who served in Congress during the Madison Administration, was once asked by Dolly Madison at a Washington reception what the difference was between the Dutch Reformed and Presbyterian Church creeds. Congressman Knickerbacker replied: "Not any, Madam, except one congregation sings short metre, and the other long metre."

The family burial lot at Schaghticoke is not, surprisingly enough, connected with the old Dutch Church. Indeed, one of the most interesting features of the grounds surrounding the Mansion is the Witenagemot burial site, known today as the Knickerbacker cemetery. Located a few hundred feet from the house and the former site of the Witenagemot Oak, this small area, originally established late in the 17th century as a burial place for Schaghticoke Indian warriors and sachems, is now enclosed by a stone wall and iron fence.

Legend has it that the year 1754 marked the departure of the then sixty remaining Schaghticoke to join the Mohawks and other tribes who had made common cause with the French from Canada in the opening raids of the French and Indian War. It is said that for years after their departure the Indian Queen Esther, a descendant of the Hoosac sachems Soquon and Maquon, made annual pilgrimages with her warriors and maidens of St. Regis to the "Vale of Peace," where, in ceremonial dances by moonlight beneath the Witenagemot Oak they scattered sacrificial tokens in the Schaghticoke's burial-field west of the great tree.

In the burial ground may be seen the grave-stones of generations of the Knickerbacker-Viele clan, including that of Col. Johannes Knickerbacker I who died in 1749, as well as that of his father, the original Herman Jansen Knickerbacker, known as "Grandfather Knickerbacker," who was born in Holland in 1648 and died at Schaghticoke in 1721. His place of interment is marked by a rough boulder, a few feet west of Johannes I's grave, and is said to be the oldest marked grave in the Hoosac Valley.

Col. Johannes Knickerbacker II, upon final completion of his brick mansion at Schaghticoke in 1770, and after more than 60 years of the leasing arrangement entered into by his father in 1709, invited the Albany mayor and council, then still nominal title-holders of his lands, to a grand feast and celebration. He and his son Johannes III thereupon bargained and entered into a series of agreements with the councillors for Schaghticoke Manor, which by 1770 had expanded to vast proportions compared with the original 50 acres (25 morgens) of 1709. At this meeting of the Albany Corporation of July 1, 1770, it was resolved to grant:

Johns Knickerbacker all the land which has not heretofore been sold or released by the Corporation at Albany lying on the east side and adjoining to the Hudson's River within the following bounds, viz: [here appears a description of the land]; for which the sd Knickerbacker is to find the said Corporation

and their Successors with Meet, Drink and Lodging once a year at his House at Schactacook.

Thus, Knickerbacker obtained title to his manor, containing six square miles, for less than \$1,000 (£392;5) contingent upon an agreement that the proprietor must entertain the successive "Gentlemen of Albany" or councillors, with "Meet, Drink and Lodging once a year" at his *hofsled* at Schaghticoke. This custom was continued for many decades until well into the 19th century, the councillors' arrival by carriage from Albany being the occasion for a sumptuous feast and entertainment to which were invited members of the nearby local gentry.

Several years ago, as part of an historic observance held at the Mansion, Mayor Erastus Corning 2nd of Albany and a delegation of Albany councilmen visited the Knickerbacker "hostead" as a token of the centuries-old link between their city and the lands of Old Schaghticoke.

In addition to "gentleman farming," an involvement with the military and later an active role in politics became characteristic family pursuits. Johannes Knickerbacker III, as had his sires before him, served in Albany County militia regiments, first as a private in the Revolution and later as a major and colonel. Following the division of Albany County in 1791 into the three small counties of Albany, Rensselaer and Saratoga, the Knickerbackers began a lengthy period of intermittent service in the State Legislature as Assemblymen representing the Rensselaer County district.

Johannes II, then nearly 70, was elected in 1792 as one of the first five Assemblymen to serve the new county. His son, Johannes III, served the same district from 1796 until 1802. His grandson, Herman, began a period in the legislature in 1816 after having served as Congressman in Washington during the Madison Administration. John Ludovicus Viele, a son-in-law of Johannes III, was a State Senator representing the Saratoga County District from 1822 until 1829. (Although church records indicate a continuance of the characteristically Dutch name of Johannes in the familial sense, civil records beginning in the late eighteenth century reveal an adoption of the more anglicized "John.")

Washington Irving's association with the Knickerbackers of Schaghticoke probably began sometime during 1809 when, bereaved by the death of his fiancée Matilda Hoffman on April 26th, he spent several months in retirement visiting his friend Judge William P. Van Ness at Kinderhook. (The Van Ness House later became the residence of ex-President Martin Van Buren.) While there completing and revising his *History of New York* he is thought to have visited the Knickerbackers at Schaghticoke and, sensing the authentic Dutch character of the mansion and its inhabitants, allowed his lively imagination to develop the fictitious character of Diedrich.

As previously noted, it has been alleged that he even wrote a portion of his *History* while seated at a desk in the Mansion's parlor. In one of the references to the family in the introduction, Irving states:

Diedrich Knickerbocker was of very great con-

nections, being related to the Knickerbockers of Schaghticoke and cousin german to the Congressman of that name.

And

Having passed some time very agreeably at Albany, our author proceeded to Schaghticoke; where, it is but justice to say, he was received with open arms, and treated with loving kindness. He was much looked up to by the family, being the first historian of the name; and was considered almost as great a man as his cousin the congressman . . . with whom, by the by, he became perfectly reconciled, and contracted a strong friendship.

In the body of the *History*, at Book III, Chapter I, now speaking in the first-person as "Diedrich," Irving makes another reference to the Mansion:

Such are my feelings when I revisit the family mansion of the Knickerbockers, and spend a lonely hour in the chamber where hang the portraits of my forefathers, shrouded in dust, like the forms they represent. With pious reverence do I gaze on the countenances of these revered burghers who have preceded me in the steady march of existence . . . whose sober and temperate blood now meanders through my veins, flowing slower and slower in its feeble conduits, until its current shall soon be stopped forever! As I pace the darkened chamber in melancholy musings the shadowy images around me almost seem to steal once more into existence, their countenances to assume the animation of life, their eyes to pursue me with every movement.

In another notable passage, at Book VI, Chapter V, "Diedrich" relates the gathering of the out-lying Dutch clans as they passed through the principal gate at the head of Wall Street to assemble on the Bowling Green at New Amsterdam, ready to help Governor Stuyvesant win a victory over the Swedes at Fort Casimir. Here the text reads:

Lastly came the KNICKERBOCKERS of the great town of Schaghticoke where the folks lay stones upon the houses in windy weather lest they should be blown away. These derive their name, as some say, from KNICKER, to shake, and BEKER, a goblet, indicating therefore that they were sturdy toss-pots of yore; but, in truth, it was derived from KNICKER, to nod, and BOKEN, books; plainly meaning that they were great nodders or dozers over books . . . from them did descend the writer of this history.

Actually, as mentioned previously, it is thought that the name derives from Herman Jansen Knickerbacker's supposed trade, that of *knikker* (marble) *bakker* (baker).

Irving became a personal friend of the Herman Knickerbacker who was first judge of Rensselaer County as well as a Representative in the 11th Congress during Madison's Administration and a brother of Cathalyntje Knickerbacker Viele, mother of Gen. Egbert Viele and grandmother of Herman Knickerbacker Vielé (1856-1908), who became a noted novelist and poet in his own right.

Oft-told legend has it that Irving visited the Mansion on numerous occasions and may have, as noted above, even written some of the *History* there. The latter claim is open to some dispute, however, as known documents and dates would seem to rule it out; in fact, it appears that Irving may not have met Knickerbacker

until after the *History's* publication, although he could have stopped off at the Mansion briefly during 1809 as been claimed. *The Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, by Pierre Irving, includes at Volume 1, page 264, a portion of a letter from Irving to Henry Brevoort, dated January 13, 1811, from Washington, D.C.:

The other evening at the City Assembly, I was suddenly introduced to my cousin, the Congressman from Schaghticoke, and we forthwith became two most loving friends. He is a good-humored fellow, and withal a very decent country member. He was so overjoyed at the happy commencement of our family pact that he begged to introduce me to his friend, Mr. . . .

From another letter in the same volume, Irving on February 7, 1811, wrote to Brevoort:

To show you the mode of life I lead, I give you my engagements for this week. On Monday I dined with the mess of officers at the barracks; in the evening a ball at Van Ness's. On Tuesday with my cousin Knickerbocker and several merry Federalists. On Wednesday I dined . . .

In still another letter to Brevoort, of March 5, 1811, he wrote:

About the time you will receive this I am expecting "my cousin" Knickerbocker will arrive in New York; I wish you would call at the City Hotel and look for him; he is a right honest, sound-hearted, pleasant fellow.



AS THEY DEFILED THROUGH THE PRINCIPAL GATE THAT STOOD AT THE HEAD OF WALL STREET."

from *Knickerbocker's History of New York*

And in a well known anecdote about Herman Knickerbocker it is related that: "He was a friend of Washington Irving, who, in introducing him on one occasion to President Madison in Washington, referred to him facetiously as 'my cousin Diedrich Knickerbocker, the great historian of New York.'"

Regardless of when Irving and the Congressman actually met, it is certain that the author's interest in the family gave rise to the "Diedrich Knickerbocker" legend whereby the name came to be a household word for generations of Americans and a symbol of the old Dutch traditions of New York State. Diedrich, or "Father Knickerbocker," became a symbol or personification of the Dutch colonial heritage begun with the first settlement at New Amsterdam and the Hudson River Valley north to Albany and the continued adherence to Dutch language, manners and customs which persisted for well over a century after loss of political power to the English.

Irving's article entitled "The Historian" in his volume *Bracebridge Hall* (1822) includes a passage which reads as follows:

Diedrich Knickerbocker was a native of New York, a descendant from one of the ancient Dutch families which had originally settled that province and remained there after it had been taken possession of by the English in 1664. The descendants of these Dutch families still remain in villages and neighborhoods in various parts of the country, retaining with singular obstinacy the dress, manners and even language of their ancestors, and forming a very distinct and curious feature in the motley population of the state.

The origins of Father Knickerbocker as a symbolic figure can be traced to this fictitious personage, Diedrich, according to the author "an elderly figure with stooped shoulders, knee britches, a three-cornered hat and a cane." So thoroughly did Irving mix the fictitious and imaginary with the actual facts surrounding the family that the distinction became blurred in the 19th century. In his *Harper's* article of 1876 Gen. Egbert L. Viele asserted:

The name of "Knickerbocker" has become a generic term, by which are designated the descendants of the original Dutch settlers of the State of New York, and has here the same significance as the word "creole" in Louisiana, which is applied to those whose families date back to early occupation of that State by the French. In more recent times "Knickerbocker" has become a favorite prefix to numerous products of industry, and a popular name for ships, steamers, hotels, and companies of every description, until the very origin of the word has been almost lost in its multitudinous significations.

(To be concluded)



Boulder marking the grave of Col. Johannes Knickerbocker, 1st, in the Schaghticoke's Witenagemot Burial-field, known to-day as the Knickerbocker Cemetery. Colonel Knickerbocker died in 1749, and his father, Herman Jansen Knickerbocker, known as "Grandfather Knickerbocker," died in 1721, and his grave is marked by a rough boulder, a few feet west of Colonel Knickerbocker's grave. It is undoubtedly the oldest marked grave in the Hoosac Valley.

IV.

Author notes literary career of Herman Knickerbocker Vielé (1856-1908), discusses Knickerbocker Mansion's future.

WITHIN a generation or two after publication of Irving's *History* in 1809 there were few Americans, outside of the older families of New York City and the Hudson Valley, who still knew that "Knickerbocker" was the rightful name of a real family.

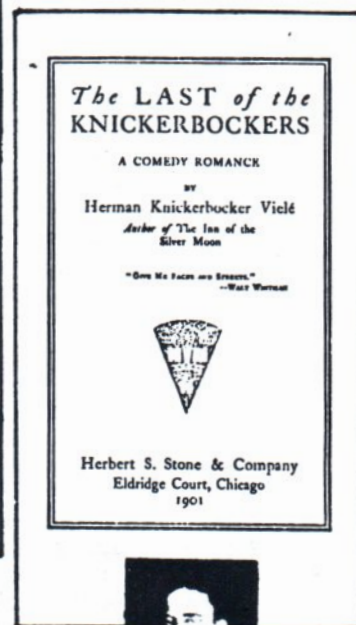
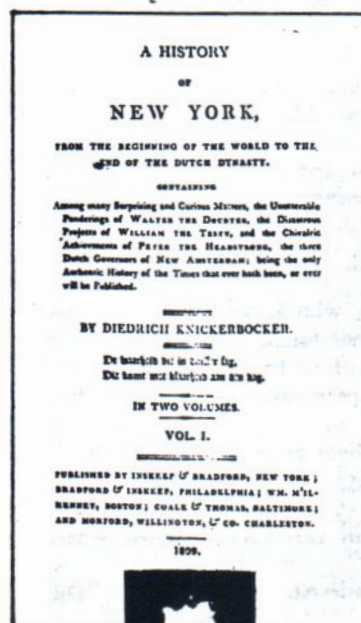
In 1849, upon publication of G. P. Putnam's "revised edition" of Irving's *Knickerbocker's History*, the author, now the foremost American writer of his day, added a preface or introduction entitled "The Author's Apology." Written forty years after the *History*'s original publication in 1809 and ten years prior to his death in 1859, the writer stated in part:

... and when I find, after a lapse of nearly forty years, this haphazard production of my youth still cherished (among descendants of Dutch worthies); when I find its very name become a "household word," and used to give the home stamp to every thing recommended for popular acceptance, such as Knickerbocker societies; Knickerbocker insurance companies; Knickerbocker steamboats; Knickerbocker omnibuses; Knickerbocker bread and Knickerbocker ice; and when I find New-Yorkers of Dutch descent priding themselves upon being "genuine Knickerbockers," I please myself with the persuasion that I have struck the right chord...

Numerous references in Irving's letters and papers indicate a life-long friendship with Herman Knickerbocker, known as "Prince Knickerbocker" on account of his princely hospitality, after the author's youthful introduction to the family projected the name into contemporary literature and widespread popular vogue. (The surname always included the Dutch "a" until the mid-19th century, when by public familiarity and wide use the more anglicized "o" became accepted, though many of the family have persisted in using "a" to this day including the present Mrs. John Knickerbocker of Ballston Spa, New York.) In *The Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, III, page 52, reference is made to a letter to his nephew Pierre in 1833, soon after his twenty-year residence abroad, in which, following a two-week stay at Saratoga, he recounts that he—

... made an excursion to Schaghticoke and visited Herman Knickerbocker, whom he had known at Washington about twenty years before, when he was Congressman, and with whom the name still formed a bond of fellowship. "I found him with a houseful of children," he writes to Peter, "living hospitably, and filling various stations — a judge, a farmer, a miller, a manufacturer, a politician, etc. He received me with open arms, and I only escaped from his hospitality by promising to come another time, and spend a day or two with him.

The impact of the family name upon American literature is evidenced by the extension of the term "Knickerbocker Writer" beyond Washington Irving. A number of his contemporaries, writers identified with New York State and New York City in the first half of the 19th century, came to be known as the "Knickerbocker group." This group, many of whom contributed to the



Courtesy of the Author

Title pages of books showing continuity of literary tradition: first edition of "Knickerbocker's History" (1809), and novel of old New York (1901) by Herman Knickerbocker Vielé.

Knickerbocker Magazine during its existence from 1833 to 1865, brought early literary distinction to New York. Its contributors included James Fenimore Cooper and William Cullen Bryant as well as Irving and such minor figures as Joseph Rodman Drake, Fitz-Greene Halleck and Nathaniel Parker Willis.

It is of interest to note that in 1856 and 1857, nearly half a century after publication of *Knickerbocker's History*, Washington Irving served as chairman of the first Central Park advisory board which selected the park plan and design of young Egbert Viele who was then serving as Engineer-in-Chief of the project. (William Cullen Bryant also served on the board.) It was said that Irving cast the deciding vote in favor of Viele's plan. Late the following year, following appointment of a new park board, Viele's plan was superseded by that of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux.

A further sidelight to Irving's projection of the name of Knickerbocker into American life and usage is found in the literary career of Herman Knickerbocker Vielé (1856-1908), Gen. Egbert L. Viele's eldest son, who achieved considerable fame and distinction as an American novelist and poet. A writer of popular fiction, short stories and verse, one of his most successful novels was *The Last of the Knickerbockers* (1901), a romantic tale of old New York City families which is told with wit and charm.

Vielé spiced his tale by introducing authentic Dutch

names including those of his own dead and gone ancestors. Gansevoort, Volkert, Groesbeck, Van Wandalaer, Van Epps are but a few of the names woven into the fiction of old Dutch families in Manhattan at the close of the 19th century. A principal character, Alida de Wandalaer, is named for the actual sister of Vielé's own ancestor, Johannes de Wandalaer, Deacon of Albany's Dutch Church in 1690.

In Chapter VII, a reference to Irving and Diedrich Knickerbocker is made when Alida de Wandalaer and a friend, during an imaginary ride through the streets of lower Manhattan in an ancient horse-drawn cab, converse with the elderly cabby:

"That there is George Washington," remarked the driver, pointing his whip to the statue on the Treasury steps.

"Yes," assented Alida, who had by this time remembered something of her former visit, "and that is where he took the oath as first President, is it not?"

"That's right, the old man said, approvingly, "but it ain't all young folks nowadays who know that much. Ever heard of Diedrich Knickerbocker?"

"Yes, he was Washington Irving."

"Correct, young lady! Go up ahead! Now listen; old Diedrich rode once in this very cab just where you're sitting."

"Did he really?" cried Alida in delight. "Did Washington Irving ride in this cab?"

"That's what he did, and no mistake. He hired it from my own father and drove it to Fordham; he and old man Paulding. I used to hear they got spilled out coming back, but then you never could depend on pop."

"How very interesting; I shall remember this drive as long as I live."

"So'll I, I guess, but then I ain't got more'n a century to do it. Ever read the History of New York?"

— There is only one History of New York.

"Oh yes," said Alida; "I am descended from nearly everybody mentioned in it!"

To one who did not know Alida the speech might have sounded vainglorious, but in truth she spoke as unaffectedly as one who being on the planet Mars might say, "On Earth I was an Anglo-Saxon."

This literary work, copies of which are still to be found on the shelves of Manhattan's many used book dealers, marks not only the continuance into the 20th century of a literary theme introduced a century earlier in Irving's *History*, generally acknowledged to be this nation's first notable work of literature by a native-born American author, but also of a deep-rooted family association with New Netherland and New York extending back three and a half centuries. Herman Knickerbocker Vielé, the namesake of his grandmother's brother whose friendship with Irving has become a part of America's literary history, owed his name and heritage to a descent through eight generations from the Harmen Janse kinneker Backer or "Herman Jansen van Bommel" (1648-1721), who came to the new world in 1674.

Vielé, who also became a well-known contributor of short stories and poems to popular magazines and reviews, died too early in life to realize the genuine fulfillment of his talents. The renowned critic and Yale College English Professor William Lyon Phelps, Medalist of the Holland Society in 1941, said of Vielé:

His early death robbed America not only of one

of her most brilliant novelists but of a poet of fine flavor. His *The Last of the Knickerbockers* contains pictures of a New York boarding-house worthy of Balzac; it is a novel combining realism, wit and tenderness. In everything he wrote, Mr. Vielé revealed a whimsicality and lightness of touch impossible except to the true artist. His was one of the finest spirits of the 20th century.

What of the future of the Knickerbocker Mansion? The officers and members of the Knickerbocker Historical Society, who presently lack the capital funds necessary to effect the Mansion's restoration and preservation, are nonetheless optimistic about the years ahead. The nationwide observance of the American Revolution Bicentennial, a few short years away, will, they feel, serve to focus attention upon the unusually historic locality in which the mansion is situated. New York State's most active participation in the Bicentennial will take place during the year 1977, which will also mark the 200th anniversary of the state's founding following the adoption of the first State Constitution at Kingston on April 20, 1777. However, of greater importance to a recognition of the Knickerbocker Mansion's historic value will be the bicentennial observances of the great Battles of Saratoga which took place September 19 and October 7, 1777, and marked the turning point of the American Revolution.

Old Schaghticoke and the "Vale of Peace," site of the Witenagemot Oak where a famous treaty between the colonial government and the Indians was concluded just a century earlier (1676); are but a matter of six miles from the Saratoga battlefields, Bemis Heights and Stillwater. Indeed, upon the advance of Gen. Burgoyne's British army down the Hudson in August, 1777, the residents of Schaghticoke and Hoosac Manors, including the Knickerbockers, were forced to flee their homes to Albany, Williamstown and Stockbridge. Alarms of the advance of Burgoyne's Indian scouts spread terror through the valley. A band of hostile Tories and Indians soon held Fort Schaghticoke and several abandoned houses of the settlers as a British outpost.

Col. Johannes Knickerbocker II, who had been commissioned on October 20, 1775, led the 14th Albany County Militia Regiment at Saratoga, part of a brigade of 3,000 troops commanded by General Ten Broeck of Albany. Col. Knickerbocker's regiment, composed of officers and men from Dutch Hoosac and Schaghticoke, arrived upon the Saratoga battlefield the afternoon of October 7 where, before the final routing of the British and Hessian troops, he was severely wounded in the right leg. Johannes Knickerbocker III, then a young man of 25, served in his father's regiment as a private.

Mr. Orrin M. Bullock, Jr. (A.I.A.), a Baltimore architect and restoration consultant, commented in his report to the New York State Council on the Arts, following a thorough study of the Knickerbocker Mansion:

The greatest importance of the Knickerbocker Mansion is not its unusual architecture, nor the date of its erection, but rather the important historical events which took place on this site and with which the family who built and lived in the house for many generations are identified. The historical events are of great importance; the architecture of the mansion, while significant, warrants restoration more because of the builder and his family, and its relationship and contribution to the development of our country.

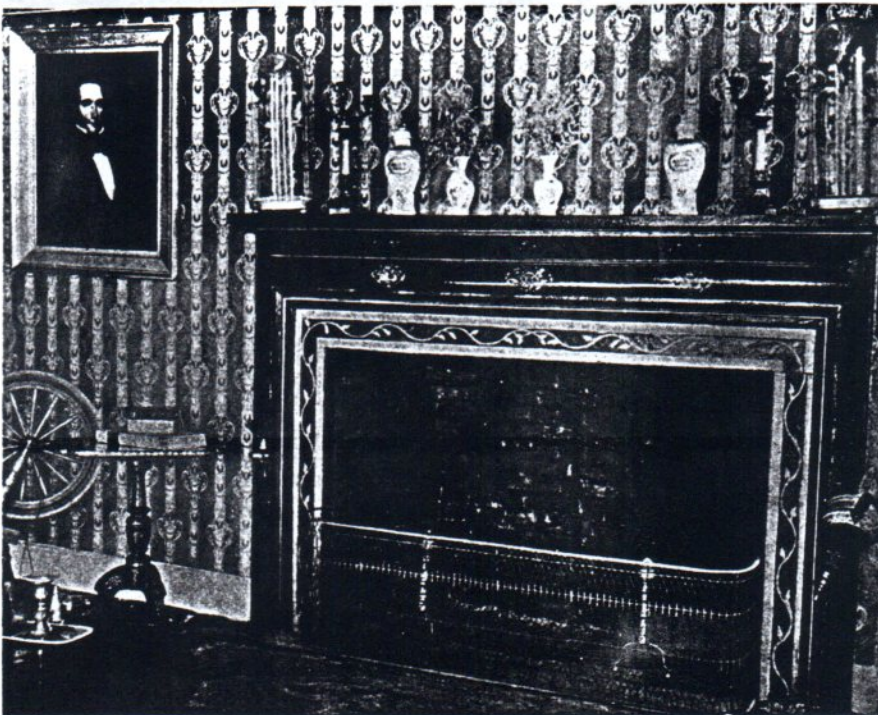
Several noteworthy developments regarding the Mansion have occurred since Part I of this series appeared last October. When that article came to the attention of Professor Robert Knickerbocker Scully of Hartwick College, Oneonta, New York, he assigned several students to conduct an independent study of the property, thus initiating a research project designed to produce an historical bibliography and also to examine the archeological evidence.

Furthermore, as reported in the *Troy Record* of December 8, the Mansion was being officially entered upon the National Register of Historic Places on December 11, according to an announcement by George B. Hartzog, Jr., Director, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

This official recognition, which came about with the aid of the New York State Historic Trust, is distinctly encouraging in that the house may now qualify for matching Federal funds in the event of a private foundation grant for rehabilitation purposes. Meanwhile, essential work on the Mansion was completed last winter by a contractor acting in consultation with John Waite, staff architect of the State Office of Historic Preservation, that provided critically needed bracing and repairs to the outer brick walls.

NOTE: A bibliography of sources used in the preparation of this series will be published in the next issue.

(Concluded)



The Fireplace in the Great Parlor of the Knickerbocker Mansion, mentioned by Washington Irving in "Knickerbocker's History of New York."

BORDERLAND

And have you been to Borderland?
Its country lies on either hand
Beyond the river I-forget.
One crosses by a single stone
So narrow one must pass alone,
And all about its waters fret—
The laughing river I-forget.

Beneath the trees of Borderland
One seems to know and understand,
Beside the river I-forget,
All languages of men and birds;
And all the sweet, unspoken words
One ever missed are murmured yet
By that sweet river I-forget.

One hears there many things afar
From cities where strange peoples are,
Beyond the river I-forget;
And stranger things are in the air,
But what they are one does not care,
For Hope lies sleeping and Regret
Beside the river I-forget.

Some day together hand in hand
I'll take you there to Borderland,
Beyond the river I-forget;
Some day when all our dreams come true,
One kiss for me and one for you,
We'll watch the red sun sink and set
Across the river I-forget.

H. K. V.

From *The Last of the Knickerbockers*

Schaghticoke Event

UPSTATE HISTORICAL OBSERVANCE: On grounds adjacent to the Knickerbocker Mansion at Schaghticoke in Rensselaer County, N.Y., a series of colorful ceremonies took place August 4 and 5, at the fifth annual American Indian Pow-wow, that recalled an historic event there nearly three centuries ago. The two days, proclaimed by Governor Rockefeller as "Days of the Tree of Peace" throughout this State, marked the oak-tree planting which symbolized to a great gathering in 1676 of Indians and English, Dutch and French colonists, the peace treaty which Governor Andros and the sachems had just concluded at the site.

Designated by Mr. Roosevelt to represent the Society, Chase Viele, of Buffalo, took part in the program highlight when six flags — the American, British, Dutch, French and those for Andros and the Iroquois Confederacy — were successively raised over the "Vale of Peace" on equally spaced poles. Each raising, including that of the Dutch flag by Mr. Viele, was accompanied by a musketry salute fired by the 13th Regiment Albany County militia, armed and accoutered as its predecessor unit was at the Battle of Saratoga.

Governor Rockefeller's proclamation was read by Lester J. Nimsker of the State Parks and Recreation Commission, and Mr. Roosevelt's message by Mr. Viele. Besides the planting of a seedling near six sturdy oaks grown from saplings from the Council Tree of 1676 when it fell in 1948, other features included speeches, ceremonial dances and songs, displays of tribal regalia and trading of native craftwork. Tom Two Arrows, noted Indian artist, was host at the gathering, which included Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas and Schaghticoke as well as Seminoles and Blackfeet.



Courtesy Daily Saratogian

The Dutch flag is raised by Society member Chase Viele, during colorful ceremonies at Old Schaghticoke on August 4th., with assistance of Schaghticoke tribesman while other tribespeople observe.



122 East 58th Street
New York, N. Y. 10022

July 18, 1973

To Members of The Knickerbocker Historical Society,
and Others Assembled for the Historical Celebration
at Schaghticoke, N. Y., August 4, 1973.

As President of The Holland Society of New York, I wish to convey to you my personal greetings and best wishes of the Society for the success of the day's program at Schaghticoke on Saturday, August 4, 1973. I have designated Mr. Chase Viele of Buffalo to represent the Holland Society on this occasion.

It is particularly noteworthy that descendants of the many Indian tribesmen who once inhabited this region will participate in the colorful ceremonies and events planned. The great treaty of peace of 1676 concluded by the English Governor Andros at this historic site of the Witenagnot Oak marked a true milestone toward peaceful co-existence among the diverse nationalities and races who settled this great State and Nation.

We of the Holland Society, as descendants of a people who were among the earliest white settlers and occupants of these lands of the upper Hudson region, have always recognized an indebtedness to the Indian Nations. Fur trapping and trading, the basis of the earliest economy of the New Netherland colony, depended greatly upon the Dutch trader's relationship with his Indian brothers. Indeed, the beaver has traditionally been the revered symbol of the Holland Society.

I salute your commendable and tireless efforts in seeking to preserve and restore the Knickerbocker family mansion which for more than two centuries has graced this peaceful vale, adjacent to the site of the famed Treaty Oak. Mr. Viele's series of articles on the Knickerbockers and the historical background of this locality, published during the past year in our Society's quarterly magazine *de Halve Maen*, have, I trust, contributed to a wider public awareness of the unique corner of history lying in your midst.

With every good wish,

Sincerely yours,

Julian K. Roosevelt
Julian K. Roosevelt
President

JKR:JS



Courtesy Daily Saratogian

A musket salute is fired by members of 13th. Regiment Albany County Militia following raising of British flag by a Highlander of Clan MacRae, to accompaniment of bagpipes, during ceremonies at Old Schaghticoke on August 4th. Historic Knickerbocker Mansion is in background.



1770 Map

PROCLAMATION



Nearly 300 years ago, some of our early New York ancestors recognized the need for people of different backgrounds to live in peace and harmony.

In 1676, a group of settlers from the outpost at Albany accompanied the Royal Governor of New York and his staff to a remote spot in the Housic Valley. There, at Schaghticoke, they met with representatives of rival Indian tribes coming from east and west.

Governor Edmund Andros planted seeds for a "Tree of Welfare." As it grew, traditional enmities diminished. Penmen, inspired by the results, referred to the landmark later as a "Tree of Peace," standing in a "Vale of Peace."

These efforts, 300 years ago, that produced harmony and concord, must be an inspiration for all of us.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Nelson A. Rockefeller, Governor of the State of New York, do hereby proclaim August 4 and 5, 1973, as

DAYS OF THE TREE OF PEACE

in New York State.



BY THE GOVERNOR:

T. N. Auld

Secretary to the Governor

GIVEN under my hand and the Privy Seal of the State at the Capitol in the City of Albany this third day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and seventy-three.

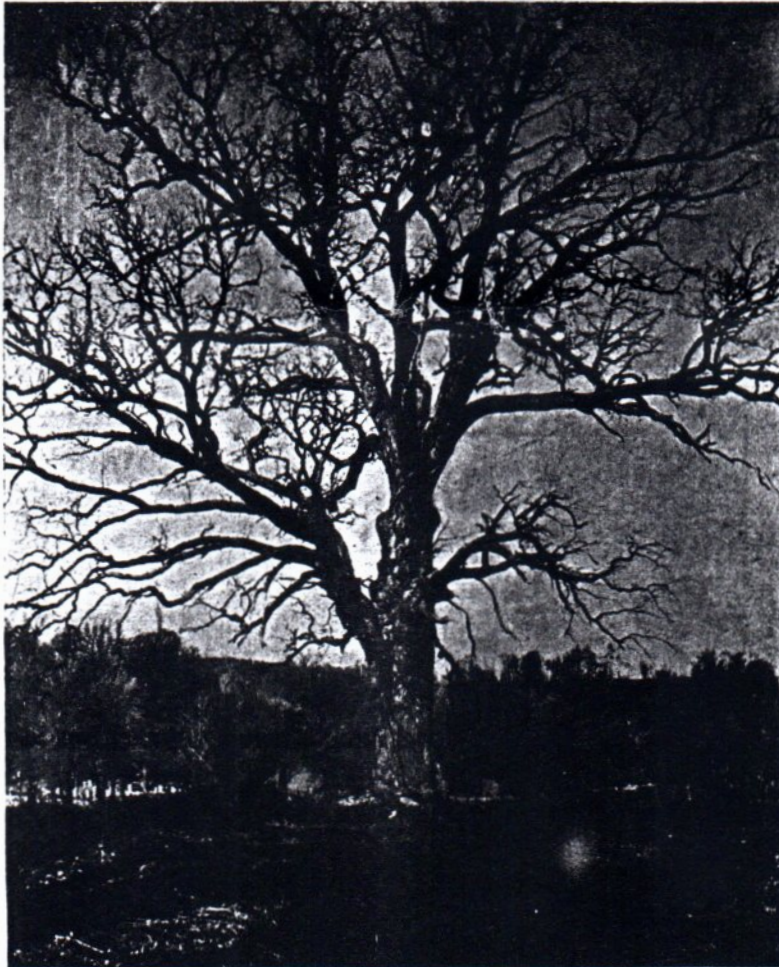
Nelson A. Rockefeller

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Photos on Pages 4, 7, 10, 13 and 16 originally appeared in *The Hoosac Valley &c.* Reproduced courtesy of G. P. Putnam's Sons, Inc.



The Witenagemot Oak. A Treaty Tree of Peace and Welfare.

Planted by the Christians for the Hoosac and Mohawk Scouts, near the junction of the Tomhannac Creek with the Hoosac River, in the Vale of Peace, Old Schaghticoke, New York. Here assembled the first Council of the Christians with Soquon and Maquon after the Hoosacs' final victory over Kryn's Mohawks in 1676.

And then to mark the lord of all,
 The forest hero, trained to wars,
 Quivered and plumed, and lithe and tall,
 And seamed with glorious scars,
 Walk forth, amid his reign, to dare
 The wolf, and grapple with the bear.
 BRYANT, *An Indian at the Burial-Place of his Fathers.*