

ANCESTRY OF HARMEN JANSEN van WYHE (KNICKERBOCKER)

(Compiled by Paul F. Knickerbocker - January, 1988)

In the 1850's, a well-intentioned, but unfortunate effort was made by some members of the family to discover the origins of Harmen Jansen Knickerbocker (H.J.K.) in Holland. This resulted in much erroneous information and genealogical confusion, which persist to this day.

Joseph Foster Knickerbocker and his half-brother John Hale Knickerbocker lived in the Schaghticoke mansion at this time. Joseph (1824-1882) was an eccentric, never married and spent his life writing poems, essays, and delving into family and local history. Unfortunately, he tended to be careless in checking dates and facts.

John Hale (1829-1858) was a graduate of Union College and died at an early age. He went to Holland in 1855 and, apparently with the aid of a genealogist, sought out his ancestors. He was led to believe that H.J.K. was a member of the prominent "van Berghen" family of Friesland and was supplied with an illustrious pedigree going back several centuries. Some careful checking would have shown this to be completely false.

Joseph wrote this up as family history and even insisted that the Coat of Arms that long hung in the parlor at Schaghticoke was a "van -Berghen" Coat of Arms. This material received wide publicity in December, 1876 when Gen. Egbert Viele (whose mother was a Knickerbocker) wrote an extensive paper on the Knickerbocker family that was published in *HARPER'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE*. Mr. Edmund Knickerbocker (of the Dutchess County branch) published a chart in 1890 containing the same erroneous material including a drawing of the "van Berghen" coat of arms.

It remained for Kathlyne Knickerbocker Viele (the General's daughter) to demolish the "van Berghen myth" in her *SKETCHES OF ALLIED FAMILIES KNICKERBACKER-VIELE* published in 1916. This is probably the best work on the Knickerbocker family though it concentrates on the Schaghticoke branch. She pointed out correctly that Harmen Jansen's family name had been "van Wyhe" for many generations in Holland. She did not give any specific information on his ancestors though certain things she said indicate that she was knowledgeable on this subject.

Around 1960, while going through some Knickerbocker papers in the State Library in Albany, I came across some hand written genealogical papers that traced H.J.K.'s ancestry back several hundred years. The papers bore no name or date and I first thought this was the "de-bunked" material used by J.F. Knickerbocker. Closer examination showed no similarities in names, dates or places, and I concluded that this was an entirely different piece of work. The information must have been obtained in Holland and whether Kathlyne Viele was aware of it, is unknown.

After examining it carefully, I am of the opinion that it is fundamentally correct. Considering that it takes H.J.K.'s ancestry back several hundred years, it is understandable that much of it is

sketchy and that there are few specific dates. In fact, if it were more complete I would be suspicious of its accuracy.

Along with this chart was a page of hand drawn and colored Coats of Arms of early branches of the van Wyhe family. I have a good knowledge of Heraldry and am convinced that the Knickerbocker Coat of Arms is, without doubt, a "van Wyhe" Coat of Arms. For what it's worth then and realizing that it can't be 100% proven, here is the basic information from these charts:

1st Generation: The first recorded ancestor of Harmen Jansen Knickerbocker, (and therefore ourselves) is Jordaen van Wyhe who took his name from the settlement of "WYHE" on the river "YSSEL" in the central Netherlands province of "OVERYSSEL". (The van Wyhe Coat of Arms is apparently based on the Arms of the province of "OVERYSSEL")

Jordaen was probably born around 1245, for it is stated that in 1271 he married ___ Echteld. She was apparently an heiress in her own right, as Jordaen became the "1st Lord of Echteld", a minor title of Dutch nobility passed through the eldest son. This was the beginning of the branch of the family known as "van Wyhe - Tot Echteld" which became extinct in 1753.

2nd Generation: Jordaen v.W. (van Wyhe) had three sons, and we are descended from Hendrick, the eldest. All that is known about Hendrick is that he had one son Johannes, one daughter Hermana, and died before his father.

3rd Generation: Johannes v.W. (3rd Lord of Echteld) married Hille van -Rivierre; had five sons and one daughter and died in 1371. We are descended from his 3rd son, Herman van Wyhe.

4th Generation: Herman v.W. married ___ and had four children. In 1392 he was the Governor of Neder-Betue, a district in the province of North Brabant which includes the town of "BOMMEL" from which H.J.K. left for America many years later. From this time on our branch of the family seems to have been located near "BOMMEL" in North Brabant.

5th Generation: We are descended from Herman's son Willem. All that is known is that Willem was alive in 1434 and had three children.

6th Generation: Herman v.W. (Willem's son) married ___ van Heerdt. He was magistrate of the town of ARNEM in 1459 and was alive in 1490. He had two children one being Harmon Harmansz van Wyhe.

7th Generation: Harmon Harmonize v.W. married Aleid van Bommel. He becomes "Lord of Ressenbroeck" near Bommel. He had a son Gysbert and died in 1531.

8th Generation: Gysbert v.W. married ___ and had a son Cornelis. Gilbert was a judge at Arnhem and died in 1548. He belonged to the nobility of the "UPPER BETUE".

9th Generation: Cornelis v.W. was a judge at Wageningen in 1563. He married Wilhelmina van Haeften and had a son Roelof.

10th Generation: Roelof v.W. was a Captain in the army and married Johanna Splythoff. It appears that he died in 1600.

11th Generation: Johannes v.W of Bommel married Jannetje Jansen of Masterlandt.

12th Generation: Their son was Harmen Jansen van Wye (he always spelled it this way). He was born about 1648 and probably came to America in 1674. He called himself "van Wyekyback(e)" and that is the name that he signed on a land contract in 1682. He is the ancestor of all "KNICKERBOCKERS" in North America.

** I have since discovered that Kathlyne Knickerbacker Viele went to Holland sometime after 1913 and researched the van Wyhe family. This work found at Albany is probably hers. Confirmation of this would add to its credibility.

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[I ran across some random Kn. research notes in a L.D.S. microfilm some years ago. Included were some hand drawn coats of arms. They made no sense at the time but they might be connected to the origin of Paul's discovery. I'll have to reorder the film. - Howard]