

New Netherland Connections

Published quarterly:
February, May, August, November
Subscriptions \$15.00 (U.S.) a calendar year
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ISSN 1087-454

Volume 12, Number 3

July, August, September 2007

On the origin of Herck Syboutsen, ancestor of the Kranckheyt family

by John Blythe Dobson

HERCK SYBOUTSZEN, of the “Poor Bowery,” Newtown (now Elmhurst), Queens Co., Long Island, New York, and his wife WYNTJE THEUNIS (daughter of Theunis Thomaszen Quick and Belitje Jacobs van Vleckesteijn),¹ were the ancestors of the family which, with the general introduction of fixed surnames in New Netherland under English rule, adopted the name of Kranckheyt.² Why such a word, which in Dutch means “sickness,” should have been chosen as a family name, remains a mystery.³ On the marriage of this couple on 16 Nov. 1642 in the New Amsterdam Dutch Church, the extremely careless record thereof calls them “Henricus [*sic*] Sibelsen, young man from Langedyck,” and “Marritje [*sic*] Theunis, young dame from Naerden.”⁴ Fortunately, the defects of this record are remedied by a combination of other sources, namely: a power of attorney made at New Amsterdam on 17 July 1647 by “Harck Sybesen from Langedyck, ship carpenter” to collect money owed to him at Amsterdam;⁵ the baptismal record of his wife at Naarden;⁶ and records in New Netherland showing that Herck Syboutszen and Wyntje Theunis — who must have been married in the New World because she had been brought there as a child — had a child born within two years of this marriage.⁷

¹ Arthur Craig Quick, *A Genealogy of the Quick Family in America, 1625-1942* (South Haven and Palisades Park, Michigan, 1942), 3-8, 9-10, gives a generally reliable account of her parents' family.

² There is a serviceable account of this family, under the spelling Cronkhite, in Frank J. Doherty, *Settlers of the Beekman Patent 3* (1995): 803-27. And although already refuted by William A. Eardeley in his *Chronology and Ancestry of Chauncey M. Depew* (New York, 1918), p. 82, it is perhaps worthwhile drawing attention once again to a bizarre mistake made by Walter Kenneth Griffin in “The Dutcher Family,” pt. 4, *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* 41 (1910): 44-54, at p. 49, where he speaks of “the Rikers who became known as Kranckheits,” and again, in pt. 5 of the same article, 41:109-20, at p. 119, of “the Ryke or Ryker Family in Tarrytown ... known as Cranckheys.” These statements confuse the Kranckheits with an entirely distinct family with which they were allied by marriage.

³ As pointed out by Eardeley, *op. cit.*, p. 35. Though usually assumed to be a nickname, the possibility should not be ignored that it was a corruption of some Flemish or French name such as Cranquy or Cranquie, which in the form “Cranckquy” is found in an Amsterdam baptismal record dated 30 Aug. 1592 (Amsterdam DTB 2:149), or Cronquart, which in the form “Cronqert” is found at Naaldwijk, South Holland, in the early sixteenth century, per *Zuidhollandse Genealogiën*, ed. B. de Keijzer, 2 vols. (Rotterdam, 1986), 1:86.

⁴ Samuel S. Purple (ed.), *Records of the Reformed Dutch Church in New Amsterdam and New York — Marriages from 11 December 1639 to 26 August 1801* (Collections of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, vol. 1, 1890), 12.

⁵ *New York Historical Manuscripts: Dutch — Register of the Provincial Secretary*, ed. Kenneth Scott & Kenn Stryker-Rodda, 3 vols. (Baltimore, 1974), 2:429-30.

⁶ “Weymtgen [daughter of] Tuenis Thomasz [and] Bele Jacobs” was bapt. 23 July 1628 (inv. 418a) [FHL 115,868]. This record, which was discovered by William J. Hoffman, was published (with a very slight error of transcription) in the 1942 Quick genealogy, p. xxi; we are indebted to Harry Macy for a photocopy.

⁷ The correction of the names in the marriage record is a matter dealt with conclusively in John Reynolds Totten, “Anneke Jans Bogardus (1599-1663) and her possible blood connection with the Sybrant, Selyns and Webber families in New Netherland,” *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* 57

With these facts in hand, it should have been a fairly straightforward problem to identify Herck Syboutszen's birthplace. Given that its name was evidently recognizable without qualification to a seventeenth-century reader, there could be only one candidate, namely Langedijk in North Holland, a municipality about 4½ miles northeast of Alkmaar, and about 24 miles north of Amsterdam. This place is clearly described, for example, in Van der Aa's *Aardrijkskundig Woordenboek*, completed in 1851 (though we do not know at what date this work would have become available in a library in New York).⁸ In the seventeenth century the region still belonged to West Friesland, and such a place of birth would be perfectly compatible with the likelihood — considering his unmistakably Frisian name and his family's marital affiliations — that Herck Syboutszen was ethnically Frisian.⁹

But the story of the attempts to identify the “Langedyck” of the 1642 marriage record is one in which the documentary context has been dismissed and imagination allowed free reign. Riker, in his *Annals of Newtown* (1852), interpreted it as a reference to “Languedoc, in the south of France,”¹⁰ a wildly improbable reading given Herck Syboutszen's name, and the fact that in Dutch records of the seventeenth century the name of Languedoc is invariably rendered as Langedoc, Langedock, or Langedocq. Nonetheless, Riker's suggestion, which probably conjured up visions of glamorous Huguenot ancestry in the minds of his readers, has refused to die although he himself abandoned it more than 125 years ago.¹¹

Riker afterward, in his history of Harlem (1881), settled instead on “Langedyck, on the river Kuinre, in the district of Zevenwolden, or Seven Forests,”¹² which (less poetically stated) is a small village in the district of Ooststellingwerf and province of Friesland, Netherlands. Although he offered no reason for preferring this rather remote and obscure place over others with the same or similar name, Riker's notion has received general acceptance,¹³ and is incorporated in the editorial notes to *New York Historical Manuscripts: Dutch*.¹⁴ It may have gained credence when “a researcher in

(1926): 11-54, at pp. 13-16. Totten takes up the family of Herck Syboutszen only because of the confusion to which the names Sybout and Sybrant were prone, and eliminates him from further consideration.

⁸ A.J. van der Aa, *Aardrijkskundig Woordenboek der Nederlanden*, 14 vols. (Gorinchem, 1839-1851), 7:47-48.

⁹ Harry Macy, “The Van Wicklen/Van Wickle Family: Including its Frisian origin and connections to Minnerly and Kranckheyt,” *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* 128 (1997): 81-90, at p. 90 n. 45.

¹⁰ James Riker, Jr., *Annals of Newtown* (New York, 1852), 36.

¹¹ It is accepted in Eardeley, *op. cit.*, p. 33, and many later writings.

¹² James Riker, *Harlem (City of New York): Its Origin and Early Annals* (New York, 1881), 184; *Revised History of Harlem* (New York, 1904), 166 n. Riker's suggestion of a relationship between the Kranckheys and Sibout Claessen of Hoorn's Hook is utterly without basis and should be disregarded.

¹³ For example in the 1942 Quick genealogy, p. 10.

¹⁴ *Register of the Provincial Secretary*, cited above, 2:429 n. 1. Commenting on the aforementioned power of attorney, the editors write: “Langedyck is a small village near Heere[n]veen, in the province of Friesland.” Such a description is equivalent to Riker's (second) statement as Heerenveen is the district

Holland, Mrs. Wood, reported to the Cronkhite heirs in 1902 that Herck Sybouts' parents were married in 1598 and that he had a brother named Sybout Sybouts.¹⁵ But Herck Syboutszen, who was himself only married in 1642, is manifestly unlikely to have had parents married some 44 years earlier; and taking into account this difficulty and the apparent absence of any detailed publication of the reputed results, we are forced to suspect that Mrs. Wood was mistaken.

In any event, these speculations as to the birthplace of Herck Syboutszen can probably be laid to rest following the recent release of an index to the baptismal register of the Reformed Church of Langedijk in North Holland for 1603-1816.¹⁶ This supplies a promising candidate for our subject, and having examined a photocopy of the relevant entry, we can give its reading as follows:

1620, den 28 January. Gedoopt 't kint van Sijb Sijbes is genaemt Herck. [Herck, child of Sijb Sijbes.]¹⁷

The combination of names is rather distinctive, and such a date of baptism would be plausible for our subject, implying an age at marriage of nearly 23 years. A search of the index under all possible spellings did not reveal any other child of this father. However, another entry in the same register shows a child of similar age who may conceivably (on onomastic grounds) have been some kind of kinsman:

1618, den 5 Augustus. Gedoopt het kint van Sijbet Pieter Harcks en is genaemt Pieter. [Pieter, child of Sijbet Pieter Harcks.]¹⁸

It so happens that a Pieter Syboutszen served as a baptismal sponsor for Herck Syboutszen's seventh child, Jan, in the New York Dutch Church in 1657.¹⁹ But we should not like to press this point too forcibly, as this name has not yet been corroborated by any other record and so could be an error.

While this result would benefit from confirmation by other sources, we submit that it is more credible than the prevailing theory of Herck Syboutszen's origins.

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¹⁵ Information from Margaret Anne Neidigh, who believes that the research by Mrs. Wood was first reported in a manuscript by Grover Williams. An allusion to this same research appears in Larry Cronkite, *Some Branches of the Cronk, Cronkite, Cronkhite Family Tree* (Mableton, Georgia, 1998), §1, p. 1.

¹⁶ This index is incorporated in the "Digitale Stamboom Regionaal Archief Alkmaar" website at <http://alkmaar.digitalestamboom.nl/>.

¹⁷ DTB Langedijk inv. 8, fo. __ verso [folio number illegible]. Date incorrectly given in index.

¹⁸ DTB Langedijk inv. 8, fo. 12 recto.

¹⁹ Thomas Grier Evans (ed.), *Records of the Reformed Dutch Church in New Amsterdam and New York — Baptisms from 25 December 1639 to 27 December 1730* (Collections of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, vol. 2, 1901), 47.