

THE STRAND

Dutch Church on the Strand
Site of the Present #26 and #28 with Alley Between
(See Photo #19 and 20)

Original Plot of Andries Hudde, 1656

Original Plot - 6

In 1656, there was confirmed to Andries Hudde a lot on the Strand extending back to the Green that was more than 62' English measure in front and more than 56' English measure on the Green. Subsequent indentures and surveys prove that the north line of this lot extending back from the Strand adjoined the present south line of the property now #30 on the Strand, owned by Miss A. J. Dungan.

In 1657, Hudde sold his dwelling house on this site to the Dutch Deputy-Director, Jacob Alrichs, in the presence of the justices and people, to be used as a church for the benefit of the community. The first regular clergyman of the Dutch, Rev. Everardus Welius, arrived in August that year, and soon afterward the house was remodeled for a church, with boards from Fort Orange. In the summer of 1659 it was repaired and "enlarged/^{by}one-half." In that year there were 60 members of the church; a few years later, 160 members.

Among the items from the original sources that prove the church to have been on the Strand, one is the statement by William Beekman, the Dutch Customs Officer on the Delaware, in a letter to Peter Stuyvesant, 12 December, 1660, that on one occasion the Indians "had an entire auker of anise-liquor on the Strand near the

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church and sat around it drinking." No record has been found of the dimensions of the lot Hudde sold with his dwelling house. It is referred to in later indentures and court records as the "church-yard" and the "burying ground", and records of adjoining plots along the Strand make clear that by 1673 when Emilius and Mathias de Ringh were granted a 50' lot adjoining the church yard to the south, the de Ringh lot included part of the original grant to Hudde. Emilius de Ringh was for a good part and perhaps all of the English period under the Duke of York, the "Reader" in the church, because no regular clergyman was available from the time of the death of Rev. Everardus Welius in December, 1659 to the year 1679 when the Rev. Peter Tesschenmaker became the regular pastor of the church.

The services of Tesschenmaker continued until 1682, after which lay readers and occasional visiting clergymen conducted the services. In 1683, Rev. Henricus Selyns, a Dutch clergyman at New York, wrote in a letter that at New Castle a sermon was read on Sundays, but the people were too few to support a minister, that is too few Dutch to support a Dutch clergyman, some of the Dutch families of considerable means having moved away. Yet only the year before in a letter from New Castle to the Classis of Amsterdam (the governing body of the Dutch Reformed Church) asking that a Dutch clergyman be sent to serve the church, the representatives of the Dutch congregation, Jean Paul Jacquet, John Moll, Englebort

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Lott and Jan Bisk, wrote that, "the majority of our congregation, comprising about 100 fathers of families, have subscribed for a yearly salary.. , , and have firmly pledged certain of their lots to him."*

Isaac Selover was the Reader in the church and schoolmaster 1634 to 1692 and perhaps later - see will of Amilius de Ringh, written by Selover, March 17, 1692 - in Misc. Will Record 11, p. 30-31. In the Court Records the name is spelled Slover, probably from its pronunciation, for he writes it as spelled above.

Tesschenmaker was the first clergyman to preach both in Dutch and English, but a visiting Dutch clergyman in 1693 could still write of his services in New Csstle: "I had there a little church full of people, Dutchmen, Swedes and Finns." This seems to confirm the continuance of the split between the Dutch and the English members of the congregation that occured during Tesschenmaker's time, after which this pastor for a time, at least, preached only in Dutch.**

The last date of record found is in 1595, when Ambrose Baker, a prominent citizen, by his will left ten pounds "to the poor belonging to the Dutch church in the town of New Castle."

*Ecclesiastical Records of N. Y. II, 868

**Ecclesiastical Records of N.Y. II, 834

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Three years later, 1698, Rev. John Wilson, a Presbyterian clergyman, was preaching in the town. The original record for this year does not say where he preached, but a contemporary record of 1702 tells that he "preaches to the people in the Courthouse."*

Several records connected with John Wilson, if they can be reconciled and proved to be of the dates cited with them, would put the first visit of John Wilson to New Castle back to 1586, and might reveal a closer connection with the Dutch church. Richard Webster in his History of the Presbyterian Church in New Castle, and C. A. Briggs in American Presbyterianism, refer to letters concerning - and one letter from - John Wilson, Presbyterian clergyman at New Haven, Connecticut in 1683-1684, after which "he disappears" from the records consulted by these writers, until a John Wilson is of record as a Presbyterian minister in Boston, and is sent from there to New Castle in 1698.

No record has been found to show definitely the time or fact of the merging of the Dutch Reformed and the Presbyterian congregations, nor that the Dutch church on the Strand was abandoned as a meeting place after the erection of the Presbyterian meeting house. Indication of a merge, but not necessarily confirmation, is the name of Roeloff deHaes as one of the "undertakers or agents" for purchase of the land for the Presbyterian Church in

*This may establish the first definite date for the court house. The church of England clergyman who was at New Castle and who wrote this in a letter, would hardly have called the upper room of a log fort, "the court house".

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1707. (The original de Haes was of French origin, but he and his family were identified with the Dutch.) That the trustees did not use the Sack part of the church lot for the Presbyterian church, but bought land adjoining is a further indication that the merger had not then taken place. Not until the early 1800's do the property records show that the Hudde lot on the Strand is in possession of the Presbyterian church. In 1807, one hundred years after the purchase of the ground on Second Street, the church gave leaseholds for 985 years for all of the front lot in two properties, the north part, to James McCullough, having on it a frame house which is required by the lease to be replaced by a two-story brick dwelling when the frame one becomes untenable. The lease for the south part to Richard Sexton, requested that Sexton build a two-story brick house exclusive of garret with a front equal to the breadth of the lot. By 1821, Sexton had built his brick house, but the old frame house was still on the McCullough lot. Indentures and historical references indicate that both were badly damaged or destroyed in the fire of 1824 that swept up the Strand.

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In Benjamin Latrobe's elevations, drawn for the Survey of 1804, a small one-story and attic house is shown on the site of the McCullough leasehold, which could very well be the frame house mentioned in his lease. No. 28 The Strand now stands here and No. 26 at present stands where Latrobe indicates a stout wall and entrance gate to what must have been the Dutch Church yard and burial ground.

These two existing houses are of no particular architectural merit, although they do not detract in their present condition from the over all picture of the Strand. However, the historical record of the sites is so important that this report would strongly recommend that at some future time a special study and effort be made to develop this site in keeping with its early use and significance.