

Colf at Beverwijck, Albany, New York State

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MATERIAL CULTURE IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DUTCH COLONIAL MANUSCRIPTS

The tavern called *De Vrouw Maria* stood on the southern edge of Beverwijck not far from Fort Orange, the West India Company's trading post on the upper Hudson. The owner of the establishment was Steven Jansz, a carpenter by trade. The tavern was named after his wife Maria Goosens, who ran the business when her husband was employed elsewhere. Before the founding of Beverwijck by Stuyvesant in 1652 Steven Jansz probably lived in the patroon's settlement of *'t Greenenbosch* on the east side of the river opposite Fort Orange. As a master carpenter he was probably attracted to the patroonship from Manhattan by the building boom which followed several severe floods in 1646 and 1647 and the arrival of Brant van Slichtenhorst as director of Rensselaerswijck in 1648. Slichtenhorst claimed that upon his arrival in the colony there were but three houses near Fort Orange; however, by 1652 the number had increased to over one hundred.¹

As busy as Steven Jansz must have been in this period of intense construction, he still found it necessary to supplement his income during the long winter months of inactivity by tapping beer and spirits at his house. On a Monday in December of 1650 a party of men came to his house to drink after having played a round of *colf* for brandy. Because of the sea-

son the game had probably been played on the ice in the Hudson River (*kolven op 't eys*). Sometime during the drinking session Teunis Jansz Seylemaecker (sailmaker) accused Steven Jansz' wife Maria of having wiped out two strokes at once although she had tapped two *roemers* (green wine glasses) of brandy. Apparently the losers of the match were required to pay the wager to Maria upon arrival at the tavern. She then recorded the amount with chalk on a piece of slate as credit toward the brandy to be consumed by the winners. Each stroke on the slate probably represented two *roemers* of brandy, or a round for the two men on the winning team. By wiping out two strokes for two *roemers*, Maria had cheated the winners out of a round of brandy. As soon as Teunis Jansz made the accusation, Philip de Lademaecker, better known as Philip Pietersz Schuyler, took his part (obviously the other half of the winning team) and demanded that Maria's husband be called in. After an exchange of words, Steven struck Philip on the forehead with his fist. When Gijsbert Cornelisz told Philip he shouldn't make charges without being able to prove them, he also became involved in the fight. Soon all four men were wrestling together during which time Gijsbert was stabbed in the left side. Philip de Lademaecker was arrested and confined to the limits of the patroonship under penalty of β 300 fine. Several weeks later Philip's request to postpone sentencing was granted upon posting security for the fine. Because there is no further reference to the case in the court minutes, one must assume that it was settled out of court for all or part of the β 300 security.²

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'Five men fighting', Adriaen Brouwer—Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich (Black & white picture replaced with this coloured one by Sara Kieboom)

The above incident furnishes us with information at various levels. First, the examination of the participants in the fight by Director Brant van Slichtenhorst, the testimony of two eyewitnesses confirmed by handshake with the director, the arrest of Philip de Lademaecker and his confinement to the limits of the patroonship, the β 300 judgment for injuring someone with a knife, and the apparent out-of-court settlement inform us about judicial proceedings in the court of Rensselaerswijck.

Second, from the perspective of social history it is worth noting that four men, Philip Pietersz Schulyer, gunstockmaker; Teunis Jansz, sailmaker; Gijsbert

Cornelisz, tavernkeeper; and possibly Steven Jansz, carpenter-tavernkeeper, were playing golf on the ice for drinks on Monday; and that during the post-game drinking session a fight broke out over alleged cheating on brandy credited to the winners. It is also worth mentioning that on the same day of the tavern brawl, the 12th of December 1650, Philip Pietersz Schuyler was married to Margrieta van Slichtenhorst, the daughter of the director of Rensselaerswijck. Could the golf match and satisfaction of the wager at the tavern have been a bachelor party for Philip? And could the out-of-court settlement have been influenced by the father-in-law, the director of the

patroonship? It is also interesting that Philip's first son was not named Pieter for the boy's paternal grandfather, but rather Gijsbert, the same name of the man Philip was accused of stabbing. Could this have been Philip's attempt at reconciliation? On the same day and in the same tavern Gijsbert Cornelisz was also struck with a golf club swung by Jacob Jansz Stol; however, it is not clear whether it was connected with this free-for-all.³

Finally, the above reference to Steven Jansz' tavern operations also furnishes us with information on various details of material culture in New Netherland. The reference to Steven Jansz' later house in Beverwijk as being called *De Vrouw Maria* would indicate a sign was used to identify his place as a tavern. This is the only such name associated with a drinking establishment in Beverwijk. But even this one example has been obscured in the previous translation of the Fort Orange records which renders the Dutch phrase *ten buyse van Steven Jansz de vrouw Maria genoemt* as "at the house of Steven Jansz whose wife is called Maria," instead of "at the house of Steven Jansz, called *De Vrouw Maria*."⁴

The fact that the men at the tavern had been playing golf (most likely on the ice) establishes the presence of the sport in the colony as early as 1650. The game was played with a ball approximately 5 inches in diameter filled with wound wool. They had leather covers stitched with copper thread. The balls were struck with clubs made of elm or ash about 54 inches in length. The clubhead could be constructed of forged iron or lead cast on the stick. Wooden clubheads were sometimes covered with copper. The object of the game compares with modern golf; however, the target could be a hole, post, tree or even a door. In the winter decorated posts were fixed in the ice, and according to seventeenth-century paintings small boats frozen in the ice often were used as goals. Each player recorded his strokes by cutting notches in a stick. Thus not only were the golfers armed with heavily weighted clubs, but they also carried knives.⁵ In 1659 an ordinance was passed against playing golf in the streets of Beverwijk because of damage done to windows and injuries inflicted on innocent bystanders.⁶



A Golf Player Engraving by Romeyn de Hooghe (National Cabinet of Prints, Amsterdam).

The fact that the fight began over an accusation of wiping out two strokes for two *roemers* of brandy indicates that tavern tabulations were kept by chalking marks on a piece of slate or on the woodwork in the room.