

Barent Jacobsen Cool
Seventeenth-Century Citizen of New Amsterdam
Employee of the Dutch West India Company

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*Fort Amsterdam on Manhattan. "Earliest picture of Manhattan."
c 1630. New York Public Library. PD*

One of the first emigrants from Holland to settle in New Amsterdam was Barent Jacobsen Cool (also spelled Kool), an employee of the Dutch West India Company. What we know of the man comes from the small amount of information gleaned from various civil and church records of New Amsterdam. We don't know when he first arrived in the colony, but we do know that he was there in 1633. On June 8th of that year, Jacob Curler, Commissary with the West India Company, purchased from the chief of the Sickenames "all that flat land, about one league long across through the wood on the river, and about one-third part of a league broad, and a musket-shot over the hill where the said Curler . . . has commenced building the trading-house called The Hope, situated on the Fresh river of the New Netherland." The purchase agreement was signed by seven men including "Barent Jacobs Cool." (*Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York 139-40*)

Besides establishing his presence in America, the document referenced above confirms that Barent had some education and was literate at least to the extent that he could sign his name. Many immigrants could not. Barent Jacobsen would eventually marry, settle in New Amsterdam, and have a family of nine children. He wasn't among the wealthy citizens of the city. Neither was he a prominent member of the community. However, he certainly had the respect of the leaders in the colony and held positions of responsibility within the Dutch West India Company.

In 1621, a group of merchants and capitalists in Holland received a charter under the title of the West India Company. Under this charter they had exclusive rights to trade anywhere in the

Americas that fell under the jurisdiction of the Dutch government, including New Netherland. The organization had the authority to appoint governors, to administer justice, to make treaties with the indigenous peoples, and to enact laws. (Valentine, 23-24)

Fort Amsterdam was constructed on the southern tip of Manhattan Island in 1625 with the objective of protecting the trading operations of the Dutch West India Company along the Hudson River. A trading settlement grew up around the fort. The West India Company had a "weigh-house" and storehouses in the early days of the city and "Barent Jacobsen Cool" was among the eight men listed as working in the facilities. (Paulding, *Affairs and Men of New Amsterdam* 64-65)

Apparently Barent Jacobsen had gone back to Holland sometime between 1633 and 1638. According to a declaration made by Barent at "Fort Amsterdam in New Netherland," dated January 12, 1645, he had arrived in [returned to] New Amsterdam in the year 1638, on board the ship *Den Dolphyn*. He signed the declaration "Barent Jacobsz Cool." Presumably he returned with his wife and perhaps a child or two. Barent gives his age at the time of the declaration as thirty-four years old. In another declaration made on February 19th, 1644, "Barent Jacobsz" is identified as a "Master of the yacht *Amsterdam*." (*Register of the Provincial Secretary 1642-1647*; 167, 141) One supposes that he used the sailing vessel in carrying out tasks assigned by the West India Company.

A few documents found in the ordinances and minutes of the Burgomasters and Schepens (city administrators) of New Amsterdam shed more light on the activities of Barent Jacobsen Cool, as well as on the state of the City of New Amsterdam in the seventeenth century. The Dutch colony, like the French and English colonies, wrestled with the problems caused by the consumption of alcohol, both for its citizens and for the indigenous population. In an ordinance published by Peter Stuyvesant, Director-General of New Netherland and the City Council at Fort Amsterdam on March 10, 1648, it was noted that "unreasonable and intemperate drinking at night and on the Sabbath of the Lord" continued in spite of orders against this behavior.

"One full fourth of the City of New Amsterdam has been turned into taverns for the sale of brandy, tobacco and beer. This causes not only the neglect of honest handicraft and business, but also the debauching of the common man and the Company's servants . . . add to this the frauds, smuggling, cheating, the underhand sale of beer and brandy to Indians, as shown by daily experience may God better it, which may only lead to new troubles between us and them. (*The Records of New Amsterdam from 1653 to 1674*, 5-6)

This was to be an ongoing problem despite the council's efforts to curb and control the sale of alcohol. On May 10, 1654, the Burgomasters and Schepens, with the approval of Director-General, Peter Stuyvesant, and the Council, appointed Barent Jacobsen Cool, along with Peiter Casparsen van Naarden, as sworn wine and beer porters, stating that "nobody but they shall have the right of handling, opening or moving from one storehouse, cellar or brewery to the other any wine or beer or of bringing any beer from outside into the gates of this City, under forfeiture of the wines and beers and arbitrary correction at the discretion of the Court." (*The Records of New Amsterdam from 1653 to 1674*, 18) The appointment attests to Barent's character. Clearly, the Council, along with the Burgomasters and Schepens, saw him as a man of integrity, a responsible, upright citizen.

In the oath taken when accepting the position, Barent Jacobsen Cool and Pieter Caspersen further defined their roles in the city of New Amsterdam. We

in quality as Beer Carriers and laborers in the Weigh-house and porters in the Public Store, promise and swear in the presence of Almighty God, to behave ourselves honestly and faithfully in the aforesaid office; also not to meddle with or assist in any smuggling, and in all things discharge the duties of our office, as honest Wine and Beer Carriers are bound to do according to the above order and the laws of the Fatherland. So truly help us, God Almighty!" (*The Records of New Amsterdam from 1653 to 1674*, 195-96).

When Director-General Peter Stuyvesant arrived in New Amsterdam in 1647, the population of the city was between six and eight hundred persons, living in 150 dwellings. According to one of the court documents of that period,

"The greater part of the habitations in this city are built of wood and covered with reeds, and some have wooden chimneys. . . Hog-pens and hay-barracks were in many of the gardens, fronting the street, adjoining the habitations of the citizens . . . the greater part of the citizens were accustomed to build their privies even with the ground and projecting into the street, with an opening, so that the hogs might come and consume the filth and cleanse the same; by which, not only an offensive smell was occasioned, but the paths became filthy and unfit for use." (Paulding, *Affairs and Men of New Amsterdam*, 5-6)

Stuyvesant set about ordering immediate improvements. On February 2, 1653, New Amsterdam received municipal rights, thus officially becoming a city. A palisade was built around the settlement. Housing was improved. Burgomasters were appointed. The population of New Amsterdam in 1656 was 1,000. (Paulding, *Affairs and Men of New Amsterdam*)

In 1656-57, a street plan for New Amsterdam was laid out. In keeping with the traditions of the old country, the Dutch built a canal from a tiny inlet that ran from the East River. De Brugh Straat (the Bridge Street) was the avenue leading to one of the bridges crossing the canal. It was paved in 1658. In 1665, a directory for the City of New Amsterdam was compiled. Barent Jacobsen Cool was one of nine men living on De Brugh Straat. The relative values of the residences were assessed: Barent Jacobsen Cool's residence was listed as "first class." (Paulding, *Affairs and Men of New Amsterdam*, 109) The original street plan of New Amsterdam has remained remarkably unchanged up to the twenty-first century. Bridge Street is still there in lower Manhattan.

Barent Jacobsen Cool's name does not appear on a "Tax and Contribution List" compiled in 1655. This list "embraced all taxable inhabitants of the city at that time" (Valentine, *History of the City of New York*, 315) It probably means that Barent, as an employee of the Dutch West India Company, did not own his own home or any property.

On April 14, 1657, Barent Jacobsen Cool was listed as a "Small Burgher" of the city of New Amsterdam. Natives of the city and residents who had been there for a year and six weeks before the date of the charter, store keepers, and salaried servants of the West India Company could obtain this status for a fee of twenty-five guilders. Small burghers were granted special rights,

such as the freedom to trade and the privilege of being received into their respective guild. (O'Callaghan, *Register of New Netherland*; Paulding *Affairs and Men of New Amsterdam*, 89)

Nine children were born to Barent Jacobsen Kool and his wife Marritje Leenderts. Jacob Barentsen Cool was Barent and Marritje's oldest son. It is believed that he was born at sea, or at least before 1639, when the Reformed Dutch Church in New Amsterdam began to keep records. Eight children were born to the couple in New Amsterdam between 1640 and 1657 and baptized in the Reformed Dutch Church in the city. They are as follows: Aeltje (Sept. 23, 1640), Dievertje (Feb. 1, 1643), Apollonia (Jan. 29, 1645), Leendert (Dec. 1, 1647), Arent (Oct. 9, 1650), Theunis (Aug. 17, 1653), Arent (Oct. 10, 1655), and Pieter (Aug 29, 1657). "Barent Jacobszen" is listed as the father on each of the records. He is listed as "Barent Jacobszen Cool" on only one record: the baptism record for Arent in 1655. Marritje Leenderts is listed only on the last two records. During those years, the majority of baptism records listed only the father and witnesses. (*New York Reformed Dutch Church Baptisms 1639-1655*; These baptism records agree with the information found in the earliest book on the family, written by the Rev. David Cole. Cole's book begins with Barent Jacobsen Kool (Cool) as the immigrant ancestor.)



"New Amsterdam, a small city on Manhattan Island about 1667... now called New York," drawing by Hayward, published in "History of the City of New York" by David Valentine, 1853. PD

New Amsterdam surrendered to the English in August of 1664. Three months later, in October of 1664, "Barrent Jacobzen Kool" took the oath to the King of England (Bockstruck, 164). In June of 1665, New Amsterdam became New York City, named after the Duke of York.

Barent Jacobsen spent more than thirty years in the colony. He arrived when it was a primitive Dutch settlement... not much more than a fort. He was there when it became a city under the rule of the Director-General Peter Stuyvesant, who made vast improvements in the quality of life for the citizens. He was there in 1664, when New

Amsterdam was turned over to the English. The population of the city at that time was about 1,500.

Barent Jacobsen lived at least until the fall of 1671. He is listed as a witness at the baptism of his grandson Johannes, son of William Isaacszen and Apollonia Barents, on Oct. 21, 1671. His wife lived at least until the late fall of 1668. "Marritje Leendarts" and "Barent Jacobszen" are listed as witnesses to the baptism of their grandson Barent, son of Jacob Barentszen and Marritie Simons, on November 4, 1668. (*New Amsterdam/ New York Reformed Dutch Church Baptisms 1639-*

1655) One family historian observed that it was a Dutch custom that when a child was named after a grandfather, the grandparents appeared as witnesses or sponsors at the baptism.

No further records of the couple have been found. Barent Jacobsen Cool does not appear on a 1674 list of property owners in New Amsterdam. (Valentine, *History of the City of New York*, 319). Again, Barent might never have owned property. He might have been living with his children in Kingston, or he might have died before this date.

The Origins of Barent Jacobsen Cool in The Netherlands

In a declaration made in January of 1645 (and referenced earlier in this story), Barent Jacobsen stated that he was 34 years old, meaning that he was born about 1611. It also means that he was just 22 in 1633, when he was first noted to be in New Amsterdam. No official record has been discovered which identifies Barent Jacobsen Cool's parents or the place and date of his birth in the Netherlands. To be sure, the name Jacob Cool (or Kool) appears in records in Holland dating back to the early seventeenth century. However, none of these records can be linked to Barent.

More About New Netherland:

The Dutch had a colony in North America from 1609-1664. During that time, which was little more than fifty years, they established trading posts, forts, and towns up and down the Hudson River Valley. As stated earlier, the Dutch West India Company was formed in 1621 and the lands of New Netherland were included in its charter. In 1624, thirty Dutch families, sponsored by the Dutch West India Company, arrived in New Netherland and settled on land that is now part of Manhattan. In these first years, many of the colonists were more interested in the lucrative fur trade than in farming. There were soon conflicts with the native Americans. The settlers waged brutal campaigns against them during the 1630s and 40s, and eventually succeeded in driving them away from the colonies. The three major settlements of New Netherland were New Amsterdam (now New York City), Wildwyck (Kingston, NY) and Fort Orange (Albany, NY), the northernmost settlement. At the time that New Netherland was surrendered to the English, the population of the Dutch colony is estimated to have been about 9,000. (*Affairs and Men of New Amsterdam; The Register of New Netherland*)

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