



ARENT VAN CURLER & THE FLATTS
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DOCUMENTS

Propositions Made to the Mohawks by delegation including Jeremias van Rensselaer and Arent van Curler, September 24, 1659

[176] Propositions made in the first castle of the Maquaes called Kaghnuwage in the presence of all the chiefs of the three castles, on the 24th of September Anno 1659, in the Maquaes' land¹

Present:

Jeremias van Rencelaer

Anderies Herbetsen

Arent van Curler

Philip Pietersen Schuyler

Francoys Boon

Jan Tomassen

Dirrick Janssen Croon

Volckert Janssen

Together with others, to the number of 17

1 Brothers, we have come here only to renew our old friendship and brotherhood and you must tell it to your children; our children will always be able to know and remember it through the writings which we leave behind us; we die but they remain. From them they will always be able to see how we have lived in friendship with our brothers. Brothers, we have not been able to bring with us any cloth, for we could not get men to carry it. But friendship can not be bought for merchandise; our heart has always been good and is still so and if that is no good, one can not buy friendship, even if this whole land were full of goods and beavers. We give thereupon three bunches of seawan.²

2 Brothers, it is now sixteen years ago that we made our first treaty of friendship and brotherhood between you and all the Dutch, [177] which we then joined together with an iron

¹ Translation revised from that in Doc. rel. to Col. Hist. N. Y., 13:112-14.

² *drie bossen Seeivant*, which Mr Fernow erroneously translates as "three boxes of wampum."

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chain and which until now has not been broken either by us or our brothers and we have no fear that it will be broken by either side, so that we shall not speak of that any more, but shall all be and remain as if we had lain under one heart. We therefore give you now as a token of thankfulness that we are brothers two bunches of seawan.

3 Brothers, it is now 18 days ago that you were with us and made your propositions to the Dutch, your brothers. We could not give you then any answer as we were expecting Mr Stuyvesant. We therefore promised you that we should let you know when Mr Stuyvesant had arrived, but as he has fallen very sick, he can not come for the present. We therefore tell you now, brothers, that what we shall say, we say in the name of Mr Stuyvesant and all the other chiefs and the Dutch and their children. We give the brothers as a present and to assure them that we do not lie two bunches of seawan.

4 Brothers, we now state once and for all for ourselves and in the name of all the Dutch who are now in or who may yet come into the country and of all their children — for we can not come here every day, as the roads are so bad to travel over— that henceforth you will have no occasion to doubt that we shall be and remain brothers; and if there should be any nation or savages, whoever they might be, who should try to stir you up, brothers, saying that the Dutch wish to fight against you, you are not to accept the statement or believe it, but you will tell them that they lie, and we shall say the same if they say that of you, brothers, and not believe any prattlers. We do not wish to go to war and shall not leave our brothers in want of that with which we can help you, but we can not compel our smiths or gunstockmakers to repair the muskets of our brothers without receiving pay for it, as they must earn a living for their wives and children, who would otherwise perish from hunger, and they would remove from our country if they received no seawan for their work and then we and our brothers would be sorely in need of them. We give you hereupon as a present two bunches of seawan.

5 Brothers, it is now 18 days ago that you requested us not to sell [1 79] any brandy to your people and to bung our casks. Brothers, do not allow your people to come to us for brandy and it will not be sold to them, for only two days ago we met [Indians with] from 20 to 30 kegs on the road, all going to obtain brandy. Our chiefs are very angry that the Dutch sell brandy to your people and always forbid it to our people ; now forbid it to your people also and if you desire us to take away from your people the brandy and the kegs, then say so now before all

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these people, but if we do so, the brothers must not be angry. We give hereupon two bunches of seawan.

6 Brothers, we give you now this powder and lead. You must take good care of it so as to use it in case any enemies should attack you, when you can distribute it among the young men. And gave them 75 lbs of powder and 100 lbs of lead.

7 Brothers, we see that you are very busy cutting wood to build your fort. The brothers have asked us for horses to haul it out. That is not feasible for horses, because the hills here are so high and steep, and the Dutch can not carry it out as they become sick merely from marching to this place, as you may see by looking at our people ; how, then, could they in addition carry palisades? But as [180] the brothers sometimes break their axes in cutting wood, we give the brothers these axes. Gave them 15 axes.

8 Brothers, as some of your people as well as the Mahicans and also the Sinnekus, sometimes kill the horses, cows, hogs and goats of our people, we request you, brothers, to forbid your people doing it. We give you hereupon two beavers' worth of knives.

All the foregoing propositions having been made, they were gratefully accepted by the chiefs and all the bystanders, [including the proposal] that the brandy kegs should be taken away from them. As soon as we had made our propositions, a letter was handed to us by the negro of Mr La Montagne, whom his honor had expressly dispatched to us. From this letter we learned that some mischief and fighting had taken place between our people and the Esopus savages. We immediately communicated the news to the chiefs and the bystanders, who listened to it in great astonishment and said in reply that we had done very well in making it known so frankly and that they were very glad of it, and for this reason, if the Esopus or other river Indians should come to them with presents and asked them for assistance [181] to fight with them against our people, they would kick them with the foot and say to them: You beasts, you hogs, go away from here, we will have nothing to do with you.

After having done all this, we asked the Maquaes to release the eight French prisoners and to take them back to their country. They gave us for answer that they must first deliberate about it with all their castles; that done, they would inform us by two or three of their chiefs. They complain bitterly about the French, because the French do not keep the peace made with them, for whenever they are out hunting, they are attacked by the French savages, among whom

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are always concealed parties of Frenchmen, who meanwhile beat them.

We were further informed by a French prisoner that the wreck of a small vessel had been found on the island near the mouth of the Canada, namely, by a sloop with six or eight men who were rowing there, and the French said and maintained that it was the bark of Jan Peree. This for information.

We received also a package wath letters which was brought by a Maquaes of the third castle from the Trois Rivieres. It was directed to M'. Jacob de Hinson,³ [182] and as he was personally present, we opened the package and found therein three or four letters to a captain of a bark who appeared to have sailed from Canada to the Manhatans, and also a letter to the honorable general, which by unanimous decision was opened by us to see whether it might be of use to us on this occasion, as it was a letter from the Jesuit, Symon La Moyne. We hope that the honorable general will not take it ill of us, as we did it for the public service and the best of the community.

The honorable commissary and magistrates of Fort Orange and the village of Beverwyck, having received several complaints about the insolent treatment of the savages in beating them and throwing things at them, which tends to dangerous consequences, in order to provide therein and to prevent any accidents in these dangerous times, have forbidden, as they expressly do forbid hereby, all residents of this jurisdiction to molest any savage, of whatever nation he may be, on pain of arbitrary correction. Thus done at the session of the honorable court of Fort Orange and the village of Beverwyck, held in Fort Orange on the 27th of September Anno 1659⁴

Source: Minutes of the Court of Fort Orange and Beverwyck, 1657 - 1660.

³ Jacob de Hinse, a surgeon at Beverwyck.

⁴ Translation revised from Doc. rel. to Col. Hist. N. Y., 13:114.