

[PDF] The Island At The Centre Of The World: The Untold Story Of Dutch Manhattan And The Founding Of New York

Russell Shorto - pdf download free book

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Author: Russell Shorto

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Drawing on 17th-century Dutch records of New Netherland and its capital, Manhattan, translated by scholar Charles Gehring only in recent decades, Shorto (Gospel Truth) brings to exuberant life the human drama behind the skimpy legend starting with the colony's founding in 1623. Most Americans know little about Dutch Manhattan beyond its first director, Peter Minuit, who made the infamous \$24 deal with the Indians, and Peter Stuyvesant, the stern governor

who lost the island to the English in 1664. These two seminal figures receive their due here, along with a huge cast of equally fascinating characters. But Shorto has a more ambitious agenda: to argue for the huge debt Americans owe to the culture of Dutch Manhattan, the first place in the New World where men and women of different races and creeds lived in relative harmony. The petitions of the colony's citizens for greater autonomy, penned by Dutch-trained lawyer Adriaen van der Donck, represented "one of the earliest expressions of modern political impulses: an insistence by the members of the community that they play a role in their own government." While not discounting the British role in the shaping of American society, the author argues persuasively for the Dutch origins of some of our most cherished beliefs and their roots in "the tolerance debates in Holland" and "the intellectual world of Descartes, Grotius, and Spinoza." Shorto's gracefully written historical account is a must-read for anyone interested in this nation's origins.

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From As the song goes, "Even Old New York was once New Amsterdam." Unfortunately, for many Americans, that is the limit of their knowledge about the Dutch colony that was seized by the English in 1664. Shorto, author of two previous books and articles published in the *New Yorker* and the *New York Times Magazine*, presents an outstanding and revealing chronicle of the Dutch presence on Manhattan Island. Much of his research is based on recently translated Dutch primary sources that have languished in archives in Albany. Written in elegant prose, this enthralling story provides original perspectives on several historical figures, including Henry Hudson, Peter Minuit, and Peter Stuyvesant. Shorto also highlights the contributions of Andriaen van der Donck, an energetic, charismatic man who played an integral part in creating a dynamic, diverse, and tolerant society that appears refreshing when compared to the neighboring Puritan-dominated colony in Massachusetts. This is an important work. *Jay Freeman*

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