

North River in New Netherland, c. 1630, copied c. 1665. Map of the Hudson River, from New York Bay to the mouth of the Mohawk. Henry Harrisse Bequest, Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Photo by Library of Congress. See details on pp. 35-37.



Map of New Netherland, Virginia, and New-England, c. 1630, copied c. 1665. Map of the coast from Chesapeake Bay to Maine. Henry Harrisse Bequest, Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Photo by Library of Congress. See detail on p. 37.

Interpreting the Little-Known Minuit Maps of c. 1630

by Shirley W. Dunn

My research on the precise locations of the Mahican Indians along New York's Hudson River in the seventeenth century took me to the New York State Archives to track down early Hudson Valley maps. There I first took note of two so-called "Minuit" maps, dating about 1630. These maps of the New Netherland–New England coast and of the Hudson River were probably prepared for Peter Minuit. They showed some Mahican locations of the period as well as the names of numerous other tribes. Also included were river soundings, rare place-names, and geographical data. The maps are printed, with many others, in the six-volume reference book titled *Iconography of Manhattan Island*, by I. N. Phelps Stokes.¹ One of the two Minuit maps represented a snakelike Hudson River divided into two sections, with each half laid horizontally across the page.

Fascinated by the visible, although not entirely legible, fathom depths stretching from the river's mouth to Fort Orange (present-day Albany), and curious about Dutch and Indian names and other details I could not make out in the small published illustrations, I pursued the maps to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. There I was able to study and photograph the actual documents. The well-preserved sheets of both little-known maps, dating the period when they were copied in the 1660s, proved easy to read and to photograph. The reproductions included with this article should provide improved access to their valuable contents. The text is intended to correct some misconceptions about the maps.

According to an article by Richard Stephenson in *Terrae Incognita, Journal for the History of Discoveries*, the Library of Congress received these and other rare maps in an important bequest from Henry Harrisse, an expatriate historian and map collector, in 1915. Harrisse, a successful lawyer who had been strategically located in Paris for many years, had access to European sources for rare items pertaining to the discovery and early settlement of America. Studying and in some cases collecting these maps and documents was his hobby. Included among the many items Harrisse collected and later left to the Library of Congress were thirteen seventeenth-century Dutch manuscript maps attributed to Johannes Vingboons. Harrisse believed that Vingboons, whom he thought was possibly cartographer to the Prince of Nassau, did the maps for the Dutch West India Company. Cryptic initials on the original volume suggested the possibility of Dutch West India Company involvement.²

I. N. Phelps Stokes, author of the *Iconography* mentioned above, however, determined that the belief that Vingboons held a position as cartographer to the Prince of Nassau was not supported by evidence. It became clear that Vingboons was not necessarily the author of the majority of the maps. Harrisse had made the assumption that all thirteen maps were Vingboons' work, apparently because one among the set was signed with his name. These rare works once were part of a manuscript atlas belonging to the firm of Gerard Hulst van Keulen, a Dutch publisher of sea atlases established, according to Stokes, in 1680. The old company lasted into the middle of the nineteenth century, when the firm's stock was acquired by dealers. When the Dutch sea atlas was eventually broken up, individual sheets from the atlas were offered for sale by an Amsterdam bookseller. According to Stephenson, Harrisse was bitter when no American libraries or historians came forward to purchase these items when they were offered for sale in a dealer's catalogue. Harrisse himself then purchased a selection, including thirteen associated maps and one view. Only one map among the thirteen, a chart of the West Indies, actually bore Vingboons' name, but all were attributed to him by Harrisse; consequently, the same attributions were assigned by the Library of Congress, which still uses the Vingboons designation for these maps.

This attribution seems to have been a mistake on the part of Harrisse, as was the date he gave to the maps. Harrisse erroneously assigned the year 1639 to all the maps, based on the appearance of that date in the legend of one of the thirteen in the collection, the so-called "Manatus Map," which depicts the Manhattan–Staten Island–Brooklyn area and the bays at the mouth of the Hudson River. This intimate map, showing farms, Fort Amsterdam, and even windmills and Indian residences, is the only widely available map from the Harrisse group, having been published in a color facsimile by the Library of Congress. Among the others, the two that are the subject of this article deal with the North American coast and the

Hudson River. They offer detailed information about New Netherland, but, being rather inaccessible, they have been infrequently studied or published.

Harrisse organized the sheets from the atlas according to areas represented in the maps and had them bound once again, this time in three volumes. The maps depicting the Hudson River and the coast were placed in a volume titled "Manuscript Maps of New-Netherland and Manhattan Drawn on the Spot by Joan Vingboons in 1639." The title was Harrisse's own phrasing, used also in a note of complaint about the lack of interest on the part of Americans who had allowed these historic maps "to go begging."³ Harrisse fastened this handwritten diatribe into his Hudson River volume. Titles for Harrisse's two other bound volumes containing maps of other areas also included the 1639 date. However, only the Manatus Map carried information in its legend relating to its date of publication. The map says, in Dutch, that items 2 through 6 represent "five abandoned bouweries of the company, three now, anno 1639, again becoming inhabited." The remaining twelve maps in Harrisse's donation, judging from internal evidence, have varying dates of origin; in particular, the maps of the coast and of the Hudson River were undoubtedly done almost a decade earlier than the date attributed. Accurate time placement of the maps is important because of the rapid changes relating to Dutch settlement and land use that were occurring at Fort Orange, in the Hudson Valley, at Fort Amsterdam, and around New York Bay.

Both Harrisse and later scholars have noted that the maps he obtained were not the originals, but were copies made several decades later for various purchasers. Harrisse and I. N. Phelps Stokes agree that the known copies of some of the maps were made and distributed in the 1660s. Stephenson, in the article cited, points out that the original of the Manatus Map has not survived. He explains that the Manatus Map now in the Library of Congress "is one of three nearly identical copies made from the same original about 30 years later. It is the only copy in America."⁴ I. N. Phelps Stokes, in the course of his research, located a copy of the Manatus Map and other maps from the old Gerard Hulst van Keulen Company collection at the Villa Castello, near Florence, Italy, and determined a likely explanation for their being there which dated the time some of the maps were copied. According to Stokes, the extensive collection of copies in Italy dates a 1669 visit to Holland by the Tuscan Prince, Cosimo de' Medici. Cosimo went to buy art, but also "took a deep interest in everything that was shown him relating to the Indies." Other maps sold when the firm was dismantled in the nineteenth century are at the Dutch State Archives at the Hague.⁵

No mention is made by either Stephenson or Stokes of possible existing copies of the two Harrisse maps at the Library of Congress which are of special import to the Colony of New Netherland in America and which are described and pictured

here. Of these two maps, one is titled “Pascaert van Nieuw Nederlandt Virginia ende Nieuw-Engelandt” (Map of New Netherland Virginia and New-England); it shows the land from the Chesapeake Bay east to Maine. The second is titled “Noort Rivier in Nieu Neerlandt” (North River in New Netherland), with the word “Neerlandt” obviously being a misspelling of “Netherlandt.” The Hudson was commonly called the North River in relation to the Delaware or South River. This latter map, which originally drew my attention because of its detail, depicts the Hudson River as it was perceived by Europeans when there were only two European settlements within its entire length, one at Fort Orange and one at Fort Amsterdam. The map is clearly intended as a sailing chart. North is at the right and the lettering is for the most part arranged for horizontal reading along the two sections. Besides the depth soundings, which are a unique feature of this map, probably its most notable feature is the precise geographic listing of nine native American nations—the Aquamachuques, the Manatuns, the Mechkentiwooum, the Tapans, the Wykagyck, the Weckae, the Pachami, the Waranawankongs, and the Mahiecans. The Manatuns are indicated under the designation “Manatuns Houck.” These separate tribes, each described by early travelers as having its own territory and its own language (of Algonkian origin), were collectively known to the Dutch as the “River Indians.” The second Minuit map, the map of New Netherland, Virginia, and New England, has a more familiar orientation, with north at the top. It, too, provides invaluable tribal information, but over a wider area, locating the Sanhikans west of New York Bay, the Matouwacs on Long Island, and numerous other tribes on the Chesapeake, the Delaware, the Susquehanna, and on the rivers and along the coasts of New England. The Mohawks and Senecas, and other tribes of the Iroquois, who were not considered to be River Indians, are shown along the Mohawk, a river depicted as floating in space, not yet connected in the knowledge of the mapmaker to any other existing waterway. This may explain the evident confusion about the mouth of the Mohawk at the north end of the “Noort Rivier” map.

Although they contain some unique material, it is apparent that, with regard to the Native American tribes, the Minuit maps repeat information previously depicted on at least one earlier map, the Cornelis Hendricksen map of 1616, a Dutch map. The locations of four river tribes along the Hudson had earlier been shown on Adriaen Block’s “Figurative Map” of c. 1614; more tribes had been added by the time Cornelis Hendricksen’s map was presented to the States General of the Netherlands in 1616. These same designations appeared on the Minuit map of the Hudson River. The territories of the tribes were well known to Dutch traders. With occasional omissions, the locations of most tribes then became standard on Dutch maps from the 1630s through the 1650s. The depiction of the Mohawk River to the west, not attached to the Hudson, also occurred on the c. 1614 and 1616 maps.⁶

Harrisse bought the “Minuit” or “Vingboons” maps in 1887. Consequently, Harrisse’s analysis of the maps was done considerably before his bequest finally came to the Library of Congress in 1915. By 1916, another important map analyst, I. N. Phelps Stokes, had prepared his monumental, six-volume work detailing every map he could locate that depicted Manhattan Island. After research in the Van Rensselaer Papers and Dutch documents, Stokes came to different conclusions than Harrisse about the possible origin of the “Pascaert van Nieuw Nederlandt Virginia ende Nieuw-Engelandt” and the map called “Noort Rivier in Nieuw Netherlandt.” These two maps, judging by the names and sites shown on them and the absence of later information, were clearly earlier than the Manatus Map of 1639, and Stokes dated them at c. 1630. He saw no proof that they were done by Vingboons and characterized them as anonymous Dutch maps. As a result of some sleuthing, Stokes theorized that the two maps, as well as the Manatus map, constituted part of a collection of maps drawn for Peter Minuit, director of New Netherland from 1626 to 1632.

Stokes particularly noted Minuit’s correspondence with Dutch West India Company director Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, who, with other prospective investors, was already, in 1628, contemplating two patroonships in New Netherland.⁷ In addition, Isaac de Rasieres, who as “upper commis and second to the Governor” was Minuit’s associate, wrote about 1628 or 1629 to his benefactor, Samuel Bloomaert, another prospective colonizer of New Netherland. De Rasieres mentioned the landmarks shown on the two maps in the Manhattan area and used some of the new terms found on the map, such as Coenradt’s Bay, Godyn’s Point, and the Hamels-Hoofden.⁸ These were names of prospective patroons. The names of these men had not been used previously by the Dutch to identify sites in the area, and were now being introduced to feed the vanity of the investors, and perhaps to encourage other speculators. For example, the familiar neck of land known as Sandt Punt or Sandt Hoeck (Sandy Hook) for many years was now to become “Godyn’s Punt.” Kiliaen Van Rensselaer’s name was included below Godyn’s Punt in “Renselaer’s Hoeck.” Although when De Rasieres described the New England coastline he mentioned some Indian tribes and locations that are not shown on the maps, his commentary is extremely useful in dating the Minuit maps.⁹

It is unlikely that these two “Minuit” maps were produced before 1628 because of the inclusion, around New York Bay, of the names of prospective colonizers or patroons. The patroons were such men as Samuel Godyn, Michiel Bloomaert, Michiel Pauw, and Kiliaen Van Rensselaer. The Dutch West India Company first offered the directors of the company and other investors the opportunity to plant colonies in New Netherland with the establishment of the first list of Freedoms and Exemptions in March 1628. The following year an improved plan was announced. Initial formal registrations for “patroonships”

began in 1629.¹⁰ Therefore, the intentions of individuals to acquire certain locations could have been conveyed to Minit as early as 1628 or even earlier, but more probably he received notice of the registrations in 1629.

De Rasieres limited his corroborating description to the Manhattan Bay area and the New England coast, which he had visited. He did not describe the upper reaches of the Hudson River, and it is interesting that the name of Van Rensselaer, a prospective patroon, did not appear on either map, as might be expected, in the Fort Orange area where he planned to colonize. While the Manhattan area was more familiar to De Rasieres, Minit, as director, had been upriver to the Fort Orange area in 1626, and possibly earlier. Although the upriver information on the “Noort Rivier” map is detailed, it may not be as current as that around Manhattan.¹¹ In 1630, Kiliaen Van Rensselaer purchased land from the Mahican Indians for his colony of Rensselaerswyck around Fort Orange. The Indians went down to Fort Amsterdam for the signing. Before this, early in the year, Van Rensselaer had sent a delegate with farm stock from the Netherlands to Fort Amsterdam. When he arrived at Manhattan, the delegate was to obtain additional stock and equipment for the planned Rensselaerswyck farms to be established near Fort Orange. In addition, Van Rensselaer sent two other farmers and a boy on the same ship. All this activity in 1630 would be well known to Minit.¹²

Van Rensselaer had registered his intention to be patroon around Fort Orange in November 1629. The absence of Van Rensselaer’s name near Fort Orange on the Minit maps is puzzling, since he and other intended patroons near Manhattan were named. However, this omission on both maps suggests that they were drawn before his representatives arrived and his upriver colony was under way. Since they were finalized after 1628, as explained above, I infer that the latest information on the Hudson River sections of the maps can be dated to 1629 or early 1630. However, much of the information was probably compiled from earlier maps and travels of the mapmaker in the latter half of the 1620s.

Although, after almost twenty years of trade, the River Indians were well acquainted with Dutch products, in 1629 they still occupied their traditional locations along the Hudson. This was soon to change. The Minit maps, in their representation of the pre-agricultural phase around Fort Orange, predate the better-known map of the Fort Orange area titled the “Map of Rensselaerswyck,” which shows the upriver area’s first farms. The parchment original of the 1632 map is at the New York State Archives. The development of this latter unique Rensselaerswyck map depicting the terrain of his colony is mentioned in correspondence of patroon Kiliaen Van Rensselaer.¹³ Thus the two Minit maps fill in a cartological gap from the late 1620s in an important early map sequence representing the New Netherland coast and, particularly, the portion of the Hudson inland from New York Bay, a sequence that began shortly after Henry Hudson’s visit in 1609.

Judging from the existing copies of the Manatus Map, which can be compared side by side and were apparently done by the same hand as the Minuit maps, the Minuit maps were fairly accurately copied. Stokes agreed with HARRISSE that the two Minuit maps, like the Manatus Map, were copies made about thirty years after they were originally drawn. Stokes had learned about other copies of the maps in European repositories and internal map evidence offers further proof of copying.¹⁴ Since the maps are once removed from the originals, the names of their original preparers may never be known, although Minuit himself or De RASIERES may have had a hand in their preparation. Both maps show some copier's errors. For example, the words "Casteels Eylandt" appear twice, side by side, once misspelled, near Fort Orange on the Hudson River map. "Sandt" Bay becomes "Landt" Bay in New York Harbor. In the title of the map featuring the Hudson, New Netherland is misspelled. Other spellings are inconsistent, and, although the two maps seem to have been copied by the same hand, spelling between the two is not consistent.

Despite some detectable errors, the maps were meticulously drawn. They are lightly colored, with soft green and tan shorelines, and blue and red details. On the North River map, red was used for lettering in Manhattan Bay. Red highlighted Fort Amsterdam and identified sites in the Fort Orange area. Near Fort Orange, the old island site of Fort Nassau, occupied in 1615–17, is overmarked in red. Most of the Mahican Indian locations were also highlighted with red.

The "Minuit" maps are of particular value for research on the earliest character and physical features of the river, and contribute early Dutch names and locations of native American groups. The many shallows and sand bars in the river, as well as the contrary winds and the need to use the tides on both the upward and downward legs of the journey, made the Hudson a challenge for sailing vessels. Fortunately for the many ships that became mired and had to wait for the tide to lift them off, the bottom was mostly sand and ooze. The North River map is a particularly detailed look at the problems of sailing on the river. This map includes the sailing reaches (a leg of the journey usually sailed with the wind coming from one direction, without a change of tack), depth soundings in the shipping channel, dangerous shoal waters (indicated by dotted lines), and the locations of islands from the mouth of the river to the head of navigation by sail.

Well populated with Indian tribes, in 1630 most of the Hudson River was still unexploited by the Dutch, whose primary concern upriver was an exchange of Dutch products for furs with the natives. Of the native residents listed on the map in their locales, the most detailed attention was given on the North River map to the Mahicans, who controlled more than seventy-five miles on both sides of the river, according to early historian Nicolaes Van Wassenauer, writing in 1624.¹⁵ The villages of these inhabitants were shown on the North River map concentrated around Fort Orange. This concentration was probably recent, for purposes of

trade. Specific Mahican locations are indicated on the maps, including two fortified villages. These are similar in location to the Mahican sites indicated on the 1632 map drawn for patroon Van Rensselaer. The Indian sites near Fort Orange on the Minuit maps were erroneously identified by Stokes as Mohawk sites.¹⁶ Fortunately, the named Mahican villages on the patroon's 1632 map, associated with the names of known Mahican individuals, demonstrate that the locations were Mahican. At the time the Minuit maps were drawn, the Mahicans, although beginning to be diminished in population, were still an important tribe, to whom application had to be made by the Dutch in order to acquire any land in the area. Some Mahican sites were fortified apparently in response to aggression from the Mohawks, who wanted access to Fort Orange, which the Mahicans were reluctant to allow. The Mahicans, a numerous and prosperous group at the time the Dutch arrived, controlled the territory around the earliest Dutch forts. It was the Mahicans who provided the land for the first upriver settlements of the Dutch; they were located closest of all native groups to Fort Nassau, built about 1615, and to Fort Orange, established in 1624.

As might be expected, the detailed North River map failed to include certain information that was readily available. Little attention was given to interior features, although the Highlands and the Catskill Mountains, visible landmarks for sailors, were represented. The mouths of many tributary streams were omitted. The map contained unexpected errors of geography as well. Near Fort Orange, a large stream entering on the east side behind present-day Papscanee Island was apparently misplaced, and the mapmaker displayed confusion about the entrance of the Mohawk River into the Hudson, where two large islands at the mouth of the Mohawk were placed side by side, instead of one above the other. These same two areas, Papscanee and the mouth of the Mohawk, were also inaccurately drawn on the 1632 Rensselaerwyck map, as well as on the earlier 1614 and 1616 maps, suggesting that some misinformation had been shared by mapmakers in the Netherlands. On the Minuit maps, Cleyne Esopus was shown on the east, instead of the west, shore of the river. Manhattan Island had a triangular shape typical of early maps, and Staten Island was not accurately drawn.

The detailed photographs accompanying this article enlarge various features of the "Noort Rivier in Nieuw Neerlandt" map and the "Pascaert van Nieuw Nederlandt Virginia ende Nieuw-Engelandt"; transcriptions of some of the lettering on the map will help locate readily recognizable present-day features. Remarkably, some names on these maps, such as Esopus, Catskill, Claverack, Pollapel's Island, Tappan, and Hell Gate, have remained in use since before 1630. Properly interpreted, the Minuit maps provide a rich source of documentary information on the peoples, geography, and physical features of the Hudson River in 1630.



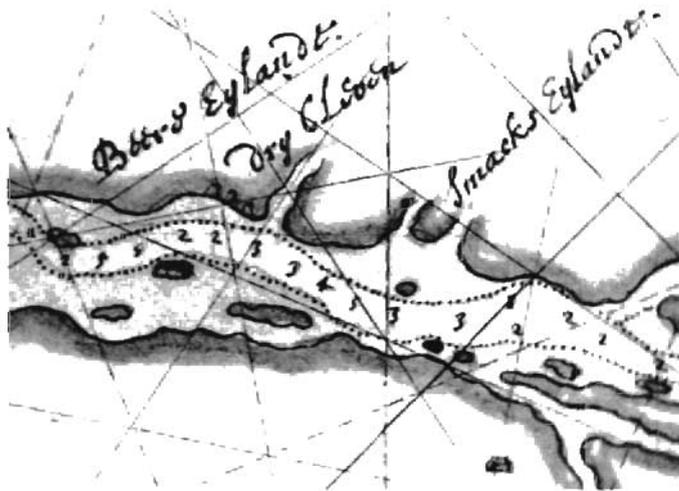
"High stony land," "lowland," and hills surrounded the Tapan Indians. Across the river on the east were the Wykagyeck. Both tribes were characterized, along with others, as "River Indians" by the Dutch.



Sailing "reaches" such as Jan Pleysters Rack and Klevers Rack helped ship captains plan their trips up and down the river. "Kats Kil" was today's Catskill Creek. Indicated by dotted lines, the shallows shown still appear on maps between present-day Hudson and Athens.



Fort Amsterdam, begun in 1626, was located, according to this map, on the hook (houck) of the Manhattan (Manatun) Indians. Nutten Island, present-day Brooklyn, is at left.



Shallow water and islands obstruct the sailing channel near Bear Island (Beere Eylandt), later called Barren Island, situated near present-day Coeymans. The three clefts (dry Cleven) in a half-circle form along the river were probably the result of landslides in the area clay deposits.



A "vasticheyt" was a palisaded village, here belonging to the Mahican nation. Two islands, possibly today's Green Island and Van Schaick Island, near present-day Troy, were characterized as marshy (*moerasitsig*) and as wooded (*vol Boomen*).



Detail of the Hudson Valley, from the map of New Netherland, Virginia, and New-England.

Notes

1. I. N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island* (New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1916; reprint by Arno Press, 1967), vol. II, colorplates 39, 40.
2. Richard W. Stephenson, "The Henry Harrisse Collection of Publications, Papers and Maps Pertaining to the Early Exploration of America," in *Terra Incognitae, Journal for the History of Discoveries* 16, 1984, 37–55.
3. Stephenson, 43.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Stokes, *The Iconography*, vol. II, 174, 175; Stephenson, "The Henry Harrisse Collection," 43.
6. For information about the 1616 and 1614 maps, consult J. R. Brodhead, *History of the State of New York*, vol. I (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1853), 755, 757; Stokes, *The Iconography*, 136, 137; a facsimile and translation of the 1614 map appears in E. B. O'Callaghan, *History of New Netherland*, vol. I (New York: Appleton & Company, 1845), frontispiece.
7. A. J. F. van Laer, ed., *Van Rensselaer Bowier Manuscripts* (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1908), 50, 197, 198; hereafter referred to as *VRBM*.
8. J. Franklin Jameson, ed., *Narratives of New Netherland* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1909, 1967), 100, 102, 103; hereafter referred to as *Narratives*.
9. *Narratives*, 102-15.
10. *VRBM*, 50, 237.
11. Stokes, *The Iconography*, vol. II, 111-13, n., p. 111; verbal from Charles Gehring, New Netherland Project.
12. *VRBM*, 157, 161, 164.
13. *VRBM*, 331.
14. Stokes, *The Iconography*, vol. II, colorplates 39, 40, pp. 11, 113, 126, 174-75. For a comparison of the two Manatus maps, see Stokes, *ibid.*, vol. I, pl. 3.
15. *Narratives*, 67.
16. Parchment map titled "Rensselaerswyk," Van Rensselaer Manor Papers. Manuscripts and Special Collections, New York State Library.

Note on Illustrations: Details of the North River map were photographed by the author; in addition, photos of both maps were obtained from the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division. Both maps, as well as the Manatus Map, can be found in the Harrisse Collection, Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. The facsimile Manatus Map can be purchased there.