

The Dutchness of the Roosevelts

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Two of the most notable of American Presidents in the twentieth century, Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt, took intense pride in their Dutch ancestry. It was the first topic that Theodore Roosevelt wrote about in the opening pages of his *Autobiography*. Franklin sketched the family line in a paper he wrote as a student at Harvard University, and at the beginning of each of his unprecedented four terms as President took his oath of office on the old Dutch family Bible.¹

Yet both Roosevelts were Dutch more in name and in tradition than in origins. Theodore, a fifth cousin of Franklin, was less than a quarter Dutch; Franklin had only a trifling percentage of Dutch ancestry. Both Roosevelts, despite their name, were predominantly English in origin.

There were sound reasons, both political and social, for their pride in their Dutch name. Socially there was no more prestigious pedigree in New York than to be a member of one of the old Knickerbocker families, tracing descent from the founders of New Amsterdam. The Roosevelts enjoyed a secure position in New York society.

The political worth of a Dutch name was rather less tangible but nevertheless seemed consequential to both the Roosevelts. It was well to give the impression that one was somehow not an unadulterated blue blood of English colonial aristocracy, but rather a product of the American melting pot. Both Roosevelts had a tendency to claim as varied an ancestry as possible depending upon the ethnic origins of the group whose votes they were soliciting at a given moment. Both were prone to some exaggeration. There were those who joked that TR would have alleged any ancestry that would pull him a few additional votes, and that through citing it he sought to identify himself with almost any ethnic group he addressed. He could express his pride over not only his Holland but also his French Huguenot and English

Welsh Quaker ancestors, Scotch Covenanters, peace-loving Germans from the Palatinate, and "by no means altogether peaceful . . . Scotch-Irish." The historian Howard K. Beale, examining all of Roosevelt's lineage, found "forebears who had settled in seven of the thirteen colonies . . . and who religiously had included agnostics, members of the Dutch Reformed Church, French Protestants, Friends, Lutherans, Mennonites, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians." One of those who arrived in New Amsterdam in 1654 was Resolved Waldron, a wheelwright, from the group of Pilgrims who had remained in Holland when most of their number sailed to found Plymouth colony. Franklin D. Roosevelt had an equally diverse ancestry. On occasion he boasted of descent from a Finnish-Swedish saddle maker, Martinus Hoffman, who had come to New Netherland in the seventeenth century from the Hanseatic city of Riga on the Baltic (now a part of the Soviet Union).²

While the Roosevelts often talked about their non-Dutch forebears, their Dutchness was a matter of pride in all seasons, transcending social and political considerations. Theodore Roosevelt demonstrated that pride in the opening lines of his autobiography:

My grandfather on my father's side was of almost purely Dutch blood. When he was young he still spoke some Dutch, and Dutch was last used in the services of the Dutch Reformed Church in New York while he was a small boy.

About 1644 his ancestor Klaes Martensen van Roosevelt came to New Amsterdam as a "settler"—the euphemistic name for an immigrant who came over in the steerage of a sailing ship in the seventeenth century instead of the steerage of a steamer in the nineteenth century. From that time for the next seven generations from father to son every one of us was born on Manhattan Island.³

The direct Roosevelt line ran as follows: Nicholas Roosevelt (1658-1742), the son of Claes (d. 1659), was the common ancestor of both Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt. His second son, Johannes (1689-?), was head of Theodore's line, which ran: Jacobus (1724-ante 1774), Jacobus (James) (1759-1840), Cornelius Van Schaack (1794-1871), and Theodore (1831-78), father of the President.⁴

In addition, Theodore Roosevelt was descended from a considerable number of Dutch families in America. Howard K. Beale has enumerated them:

Jean de la Montagne and Rachel de Forest landed in New Amsterdam from Leyden in the *Rensselaerwyck* on March 5, 1637. Abraham Isaack Ver Planck and his wife, Maria Vinje, had a son born in New Amsterdam

January 1, 1637, and Cornelis Jacobsen Stille leased a farm on Manhattan Island Aug. 15, 1639. Hendrick Van Dyck and his wife Divertje Cornelise first came from Utrecht, Holland, in 1640 when he was an ensign of militia in New Netherland. They returned more permanently in 1645 when he was sent out as *schout fiscal*. . . . Cornelius Jansen Clopper had a business in New Amsterdam in 1652. Resolved Waldron and his wife Rebecca Hendricks, daughter of Hendrick Koch, came to New Amsterdam in 1654. Jan Peek sold two houses in Albany on April 14, 1655, and Volckjie Jurrianese, who signed with her mark, was living there in 1657. Also, the marriage of David Pieterse Schuyler was recorded on October 13th of the latter year. Jan Barentsen Kunst sailed to New Amsterdam on the *Gilded Beaver* in 1658, and Jan Louwe Bogert and Cornelia Evertse, arriving on the *Spotted Cow*, settled in Bedford (now a part of Brooklyn) in 1663. In 1674, Wynant Gerritse Van der Poel, husband of Tryntje Melgers, was trading real estate and running a business in Albany.⁵

From all this array of ancestors, some traces of Dutchness persisted into the nineteenth century. From his grandfather, Cornelius Van Schaack Roosevelt, came one memorable tale. Cornelius when a small boy, on a summer afternoon after listening to a second long Dutch Reformed sermon, came out of the church ready for excitement. He encountered a herd of pigs and jumped onto a big boar that immediately carried him back through the middle of the dispersing congregation.

A bit of Dutchness even formed one of Theodore Roosevelt's own memories. When he was tiny, his grandmother, Cornelius' wife, although she was not herself Dutch, taught him the only Dutch words he ever learned, "a baby song of which the first line ran, '*Trippa trippa tronjes*.'" In 1909 when Roosevelt was hunting big game and leading a scientific expedition in East Africa, he tried the words on Boer settlers he encountered, and found that although they had difficulty in understanding his pronunciation, they too knew the song, and it formed a bond of union between them and Roosevelt.

"It was interesting to meet these men whose ancestors had gone to the Cape about the time that mine went to America two centuries and a half previously, and to find that the descendants of the two streams of emigrants still crooned to their children some at least of the same nursery songs."

Part of the Boers' difficulty in understanding Roosevelt may have come from his imperfect memory of the song. A recent biographer, Edmund Morris, has found the song at the Theodore Roosevelt birthplace, and noted down the words as

*Trippel trippel toontjes,
Kippen in de boontjes . . .*⁶

It was Franklin Roosevelt with his lesser degree of Dutchness who seemed to take the greater interest in his Dutch forebears, not only in the paper he wrote at Harvard but even during his years as President. Perhaps it was because he was a collector, not only of stamps, small books, naval history, ship models, naval prints, and Dutch tiles, but also of ancestors. Genealogy interested him as it had his mother, Sara Delano Roosevelt, who relished reciting lineages. Eleanor Roosevelt, a niece of Theodore, was also descended from several other prominent families, including the Livingstons. Once when as First Lady she was queried about her Livingston ancestry, she did not try directly to answer but obtained the information from her husband. She has reminisced that Franklin knew her ancestry better than she did herself.⁷

The interest in his Dutch ancestry began early for Franklin D. Roosevelt. When he was nineteen years old, in his second year at Harvard University, he decided to write a college paper on "The Roosevelt Family in New Amsterdam before the Revolution." He asked his mother to copy for him "all the extracts in our old Dutch Bible," and consulted a genealogical document one of the Roosevelts had compiled in 1831. From documentary histories he obtained some additional data. In all, he turned out a sixty-page handwritten paper, upon which his professor noted: "Material good. Form fair." It was a correct estimate.⁸

Franklin D. Roosevelt began his account with the first Roosevelt in New Netherland, Claes Martensen van Rosenvelt. Franklin was not aware of the spelling "Rosenvelt," but did note that Claes almost immediately dropped the "van" and that there were numerous variations in early spelling. It was spelled, he explained, in almost a dozen ways, "due to the illiteracy not only of the members of the family but of the clerks of public offices." Most of the family, and those best known, he explained, spelled the name with two o's but pronounced it as in the original Dutch, as though it were a single vowel—like "rose" A bit of evidence that he introduced on the strange spelling of the name was a "Claes Roosinffelt" he found in a list of those in Ulster County, New York, who in 1689, after the English conquest of New Netherland, took an oath of allegiance to the King. Franklin thought this was the original Claes, but it was his son, who came to be known as Nicholas Roosevelt.⁹

The spelling "Rosenvelt" gave ammunition in the 1930's to anti-Semites hostile to Roosevelt, who used the name to try to prove him Jewish. Some Jews were eager to claim him as one of their own. In response to a query, Roosevelt wrote concerning the Roosevelts: "In the dim past they may have been Jews or Catholics or Protestants—what I am more interested in is whether they were good citizens and believers in God—I hope they were both."¹⁰

In the early 1900's neither Theodore nor Franklin D. Roosevelt tried to pinpoint the location in Holland from which the Roosevelts had come. In later years, Franklin came to believe, as he wrote a Michigan Dutchman in 1932, that they were undoubtedly from the island of Tholen, which is near the mouth of the Rhine in Zeeland.¹¹ Americans interested in Roosevelt's genealogy wrote the head of the General Netherland Tourist Association, W. P. F. van Deventer, who undertook an inquiry. It led to the small Zeeland village of Oud-Vossemeer on Tholen, where the name Roosevelt (spelled with one o) was relatively common. There were still three homesteads there which had belonged to the Roosevelts, and in the church was a large brass chandelier bearing an inscription stating that it was the gift of Johannis van Rosevelt. In the one-room town hall, the mantelpiece bore the coats of arms of local families; a portion of one of these bore a chevron with three roses. The villagers were ready enough to claim President Roosevelt, but one of them complained: "He does not care. When the Church, in which 'nis' chandelier is hanging had to be repaired, a request was made, asking him to contribute, but nothing has come of it."¹²

The fact was, as Franklin D. Roosevelt pointed out when this information came to his attention, that the crucial evidence in the form of a record of Claes Martensen van Rosenvelt had not as yet been found. The Minister to the Netherlands, Grenville T. Emmet, in 1936 sent him a translated article about Oud-Vossemeer and a photograph of the Roosevelt coat of arms. Roosevelt was interested but cautious: "'Undoubtedly the Roosevelts of that place were kinsmen but, of course, the key of the Vossemeer connection would lie in discovering any definite record of the first Roosevelt who came to this country and from whom all the Roosevelts in America are descended.'" No such record subsequently came to Roosevelt's attention, but Allen Churchill in his collective biography, *The Roosevelts*, places the family firmly in Oud-Vossemeer.¹³

The first Roosevelt was a farmer, who came with sufficient cash to purchase for one hundred guilders a forty-eight-acre *bouwerie* in mid-Manhattan, beginning at about Twenty-ninth Street. It came to be known as Rose Hill. When Claes's son, also called Claes, was nine years old, the British captured the colony, renaming it and the city New York. The younger Claes allowed his name to become anglicized; he became Nicholas Roosevelt. For a time he lived at Esopus (present-day Kingston), ninety miles up the Hudson, but then returned to New York City, where the two presidential lines of the family lived generation after generation. In the city, Nicholas was "a burgher of the major right," according to city records, a miller who became an alderman. He lived to be a patriarch of eighty-four, leaving some forty-



Franklin D. Roosevelt taking his oath of office as
Governor of New York, January 1, 1929, with his
hand placed on the old Dutch family Bible
(Keystone Press Agency)

five children and grandchildren, and was the progenitor of two Presidents.¹⁴

From this time on the Roosevelts were a family of civic-minded, prosperous businessmen. By the 1730's they were beginning to speak English as their first language although into the nineteenth century many spoke Dutch at Sunday dinner. Jacobus and Johannes Roosevelt became James and John. One of the Johannes Roosevelts was graduated from Yale in 1735. For five generations until 1821, the males in Theodore Roosevelt's branch of the family married women with Dutch names. After only three generations, in 1752, Franklin D. Roosevelt's branch broke away.

In his college thesis, Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote, betraying the sense of social status with which he had been reared: "As regards the marriages of the Roosevelts, the first three were, as was natural in a Dutch colony, with Dutch-descended women. After the third generation the marriages were for the most part with those of English descent, but Dutch marriages occurred even then, as the best New York families were still Dutch. Thus the stock kept virile and abreast of the times."

The ancestors of Theodore Roosevelt became successful as hardware merchants, a business which ultimately his father inherited. Franklin's ancestor Isaac Roosevelt built a comfortable family fortune as a sugar renner and merchant from the 1740's through the American Revolution. During the conflict, most of the Roosevelts were conspicuous patriots. Franklin D. Roosevelt was particularly proud of Isaac Roosevelt, who was a member of the New York constitutional convention and one of the first members of the state senate. Gilbert Stuart's portrait of Isaac hangs in the living room at Hyde Park.¹⁵

The legacy of both Theodore and Franklin D. Roosevelt was one of generations of affluence—not enormous fortunes by the standards of their day and ours, but despite their modesty in protesting their limited means, substantial wealth. The \$200,000 Theodore Roosevelt received as a legacy from his father would be the equivalent of perhaps a million and a half dollars in the 1980's.

Equally important was the legacy of public service. Already at nineteen, Franklin D. Roosevelt had had that firmly impressed upon him through the example of his parents, functioning like a family of benevolent country squires in Hyde Park, and by the energetic example of Theodore Roosevelt, who had just succeeded to the presidency that fall. He concluded the study of his ancestors ringingly:

Some of the famous Dutch families in New York have today nothing left but their name—they are few in numbers, they lack progressiveness and a true democratic spirit. One reason—perhaps the chief—of the virility of

the Roosevelts is this very democratic spirit. They have never felt that because they were born in a good position they could put their hands in their pockets and succeed. They have felt, rather, that, being born in a good position, there was no excuse for them if they did not do their duty by the community, and it is because this idea was instilled into them from their birth that they have in nearly every case proved good citizens.¹⁶

Pride in their Dutch lineage and in the Dutch tradition was obviously important to both the Roosevelts. The Dutch image was a prestigious one, embodying good citizenship, stubborn courage, industry, resourcefulness, and cleanliness. It was in part compounded of the paintings of the Dutch masters—the bright, clean, affluent household scenes of Vermeer and the solidity of the burghers and their wives who sat for Rembrandt. The popular image of cleanliness and brightness came to be promulgated in two widely sold commercial products, Dutch Boy paint and Old Dutch Cleanser, which portrayed a Dutch housewife, stick in hand, energetically chasing dirt.

In part, the image in New York grew out of the frolicsome mock epic of Washington Irving's *History of New York*, first published in 1809 as the purported work of one Diedrich Knickerbocker. Irving's New Netherland, with its stolid, provincial Dutch settlers, formidable as trenchermen, bore some resemblance to Rabelais's Touraine and the book thinly disguised the foibles of some of Irving's contemporaries. Yet overall it created an appealing legend of a sturdy innocence soon swamped by an alien Yankee culture. Knickerbocker became the prized appellation of everything of Dutch descent; the cartoon symbol for New York City became "Father Knickerbocker" in his old-fashioned Dutch apparel.¹⁷

Dutchness implied democracy not only to the Roosevelts but to all educated Americans of the late nineteenth century. John Lothrop Motley augmented the image in his *Rise of the Dutch Republic* (1856), which presented the sixteenth-century revolt against Spanish rule as the cause of democratic, tolerant Protestantism. Mary Mapes Dodge in turn drew upon Motley's history for her *Hans Brinker, or, The Silver Skates* (1865), which introduced the virtues of the Dutch to generations of American children. Further, there was the admiration of William of Orange, who in 1689 had come to England with his wife Mary II to make secure for the English the rights gained in the Glorious Revolution.

Dutchness also symbolized economic enterprise, the resourcefulness of merchants sending their fleets throughout the world and of the millers and renners like the Roosevelts in New York. These were also characteristics of the British and the French, but on one occasion Franklin D. Roosevelt found it useful to give them at least by implica-

tion a Dutch emphasis. In the neutrality period of 1939 when an American newspaperman quite correctly enumerated the Roosevelts' connections for several generations with the British and French, Roosevelt sought to refute him by citing Isaac Roosevelt's sugar trade: "If he would look into the question of 'family ties,' he would realize that the Roosevelt family, in the West Indian sugar business, was compelled to contend many years against the British and French interests in those Islands—and that is what made them revolutionists rather than Tories in 1776."¹⁸ (The greater likelihood is that Isaac Roosevelt had profited through illegal trade with the French.)

Both Roosevelts were members of organizations formed by those claiming Dutch descent. Theodore, like his father, belonged to the St. Nicholas Society of the City of New York, which in 1905 published a brief genealogical record of its members. Franklin D. Roosevelt was active in the Holland Society, and through it furthered his interest in colonial Dutch architecture. In 1923, he urged in its publication, *De Halve Maen*, that the society sponsor a book of photographs of old Dutch houses, and then as chairman of its Publication Committee, raised \$7,000 for its undertaking.¹⁹ It resulted in the attractive *Dutch Houses in the Hudson River Valley before 1776* (1929) by the historian Helen W. Reynolds. In the introduction, Roosevelt wrote: "The genesis of my interest . . . lies in the destruction of a delightful old house in Dutchess County, New York, when I was a small boy; for, many years later, in searching vainly for some photograph or drawing of that house, I came to realize that such dwellings of the colonial period in New York as had stood until the twentieth century were fast disappearing before the march of modern civilization and that soon most of them would be gone."²⁰

Throughout the remainder of his life, Roosevelt continued through Miss Reynolds his interest in Dutch colonial houses and history. The style of architecture and the construction material of fieldstone so greatly appealed to him that he saw that they were incorporated into the post offices at Hyde Park and in neighboring Poughkeepsie and Rhinebeck during his years as President. It became the architectural style, too, that he used in building a small house for himself on a hilltop on the eastern bounds of his estate, and most notably in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, where his papers and mementos are to be found. Thanks largely to Roosevelt there was a renaissance of Dutch colonial architecture in Hyde Park and its vicinity.²¹

During the 1920's, Roosevelt was also active in the Netherlands-America Foundation, which sought to promote better relations between the two countries. He was a prime mover in 1922 to form a single organization with the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in

New York to avoid overlapping activities and to make a stronger and wider appeal for support. Representatives of the two groups met at his home at 49 East Sixty-fifth Street, and typically Roosevelt presented them with a comprehensive scheme. He enjoyed planning of that sort:

Mr. Roosevelt suggested that there be organized a Netherlands-America Federation to act as a sort of clearing house, and to include as many as possible of the societies working toward better relations between the Netherlands and the United States. He suggested that each society might keep its own identity but work with the others in joint enterprises, and share in a general publicity; and that if one organization undertook a piece of work the others would be invited to cooperate if they saw fit. Such a plan would limit duplication of interest. . . . He thought that there should be frequent meetings for joint conference between the heads of the separate branches, so that each might understand and support the enterprises of the other. If such a Federation were achieved, Mr. Roosevelt thought that the magazine, 'Holland and Her Colonies,' now published by the Chamber of Commerce, might be developed into a true Netherland-American magazine to serve the interests not only of commerce but of the arts, literature, and social activities, and of the West as well as of the East.²²

The conference went well, but thereafter Roosevelt, who had a multiplicity of similar interests, does not seem to have played any role in the enterprise. He continued his association with the Holland Society and upon its fiftieth anniversary, January 17, 1935, telephoned his greetings from the White House to the assembled celebrants:

Our early forebears brought from the Netherlands a quality of endurance against great odds—a quality of quiet determination to conquer obstacles of nature and obstacles of man. That is why for many years I have been so deeply interested in the preservation of the records and monuments left in New York City and the Hudson River Valley by the Dutch pioneers. The influence of New Netherland on the whole Colonial period of our history, which culminated in the War for Independence, has not as yet been fully recognized. . . . It is an influence which manifests itself today in almost every part of our Union of States.²³

Both Roosevelts as public figures had some interest in the modern Netherlands, but were ordinarily preoccupied with the great powers. For Theodore Roosevelt, Dutchness seems to have been a matter of inheritance, not presidential action.

Theodore Roosevelt's view of the Netherlands was that the country, like Sweden, had long since lost its standing as a power but none-

theless was in a healthy state. To his friend Cecil Arthur Spring-Rice, who feared the decline of Great Britain, he wrote consolingly in 1901 that those two nations "have had a couple of centuries of perfectly healthy life since their greatness vanished. The loss of greatness was a real and terrible loss, but yet a good deal remained."²⁴

A decade later, when Roosevelt visited the Netherlands while on a European tour, he became decidedly more positive about it. In part that might have been because he received such a warm reception. "Late in the evening we crossed into Holland," he wrote, "and at the first place we stopped there was a wildly enthusiastic mob of ten thousand people cheering and calling." He suspected that the Dutch, like the people of other countries he visited, took "a quite unwarranted feeling of interest in and liking for me, because to them I symbolized my country, and my country symbolized something that stirred them."

The warmth of the Dutch, whether warranted or not, stimulated a reciprocal warmth in Roosevelt. He formed a high opinion of the Dutch people—except for Queen Wilhelmina and her consort, whom he heartily disliked. "It was Wilhelmina's pretentiousness that made her ridiculous," TR observed in a patronizing critique. Holland in his eyes was a small country less important than some of the states in the federal Union, and the sovereign less important than the governors of those states. For her to behave "as if she belonged to the God-given-ruler class . . . was absurd." The comments reflected upon Roosevelt as much as upon the Queen. Perhaps he felt that she was not as deferential as she might be toward him since he was an ex-President, not an actual head of state. Roosevelt may have been a bit touchy about being a former rather than present President. Later he mentioned how in Denmark the Russian envoy had complained to the American minister because Roosevelt, not even an Excellency, was being entertained in the royal palace in the same rooms the Czar had occupied the previous summer. Perhaps one of the reasons why Roosevelt found the Dutch people quite charming was that "the crowd behaved exactly as if I were still President and home in America."

In total, Roosevelt's estimate of the Netherlands was quite positive, more so than before his visit:

There was one thing I found really consoling about Holland. After the beginning of the eighteenth century it had gone steadily downhill, and was very low indeed at the close of the Napoleonic wars. Since then it has steadily risen, and though the nation itself is small I was struck by the power and alertness and live spirit of the people as individuals and collectively. They had completely recovered themselves. When I feel melancholy about some of the tendencies in England and the United States, I like to think that they probably only represent temporary maladies, and

that ultimately our people will recover themselves and achieve more than they have ever achieved; and Holland shows that national recovery can really take place.²⁵

During World War I, when Roosevelt was distributing money from the fund he had established with the Nobel Peace Prize, he allotted \$1,000 for the care of Belgian refugees in the Netherlands. "In Holland," he noted, "the burden of caring for the Belgian victims of the German horror has been very heavy."²⁶

In those same war years, young Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was serving as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in the Woodrow Wilson administration, first became indirectly involved with the Dutch government. In March 1918 he sent an unofficial feeler through a submarine expert, Marley F. Hay, who was departing for the Netherlands, to find out if the government would be willing to sell the island of Curacao off the coast of South America. Roosevelt may well have been acting on his own, since Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels asked Hay an hour later if Roosevelt had spoken to him. When Hay said he had, Daniels told him not to sound out the Dutch, that Daniels had taken up the matter with President Wilson, who had declared the United States already had trouble enough with South American countries. Shortly afterward, Roosevelt, who had heard of Daniels' conversation, asked Hay to query the Dutch nonetheless. When Hay arrived in the Netherlands he conveyed Roosevelt's message to the Foreign Minister, who replied that the government could not consider selling the island for fear Germany would regard it as an unneutral act.²⁷

During World War II, when the Netherlands was again in the uncomfortable position of being a small neutral nation next to its powerful German neighbor, Franklin D. Roosevelt was a friend in the White House. When the threat of a Nazi invasion first became acute, he could not guarantee armed assistance but at least could offer a refuge. During the first few weeks of the war in September and October 1939, Hitler's forces wiped out opposition in Poland, then turned toward the west and paused. The Belgian and Dutch governments received reports that Germany might invade the Netherlands on November 9. Roosevelt sent personal and unofficial messages to both King Leopold and Queen Wilhelmina, offering to give refuge to their families. "In view of the fact that Leopold is an old friend of mine and that I have ancestral Dutch connections it would be a decent thing to do," he explained to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, adding: "in addition whether they accepted or declined, if war comes to them it might be a helpful political gesture for the future."²⁸ He sent a warm note to Queen Wilhelmina, whom he had never met:

"I am thinking much of you and the House of Orange in these

critical days, and it occurs to me that in the event of the invasion of Holland you may care to have the Crown Princess and the children come to the United States temporarily to be completely safe against airplane raids. It would give Mrs. Roosevelt and me very great happiness to care for them over here as if they were members of our own family and they could come to us either in Washington or at our country place at Hyde Park. . . ."29

The first threat of invasion did not materialize, but in December, Roosevelt renewed his offer in a lengthy letter. He assured Queen Wilhelmina that he would at a moment's notice send a cruiser to a safe point to carry her grandchildren, and Princess Juliana, should she want to come, to stay with him at the White House or with his eighty-five-year-old mother at Hyde Park:

"You, my good friend, I know will want to stick by the ship. . . .

"Some day I shall hope to have the great privilege of meeting you. You do not know it but the only time I have seen you was when we were both children—and you were driving in one of the parks at The Hague."³⁰

Roosevelt was two years younger than Queen Wilhelmina.

At Roosevelt's direction, the minister to the Netherlands, George A. Gordon, had audiences with the Queen in November 1939 and again in January 1940, when there were fresh indications that Nazi troops were about to cross the Dutch frontier. Each time the Germans stopped short of action, leading Gordon to think that the audiences had had a salutary effect.

In the spring of 1940, there were incessant reports that the Germans were planning a major attack to the west, and on April 9 they dashed into Denmark and Norway. Four days later, Gordon cabled that the Netherlands was being threatened even more seriously than before, and asked Roosevelt to send a fresh message to the Queen. Roosevelt decided not to do so; it would have been pointless, since nothing he could do would prevent the Germans from acting.³¹

Finally, as had been so long threatened, the Nazis on May 10 opened their blitz of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Within four days the Netherlands was overrun and Queen Wilhelmina had to move her government to London and to continue resistance from there.

While Roosevelt had not been able to help fend against the German sweep, he reiterated on May 18, 1940, by secret cable through Ambassador Joseph Kennedy in London, his offer to help the Dutch royal family if the "inhuman bombing of England" made it advisable. He would send a cruiser or a merchant ship with convoy to an Irish port, if Queen Wilhelmina wished.³²

Instead Queen Wilhelmina stayed in London with the government-

in-exile, distinguishing herself with her broadcasts to bolster the morale of the Dutch people. Juliana and her daughters departed in June for Canada, rather than the United States, since only in an allied country could she with certainty resume royal powers in the event of Wilhelmina's death.

In the summer of 1942, with the United States in the war, there were no longer, as Queen Wilhelmina has written, "the theoretical problems that could have been created by a visit from me, as a belligerent, to a 'neutral' country." She accepted President Roosevelt's invitation, flying to Canada, then taking a train to Lee, Massachusetts, in the Berkshires, not far from Hyde Park. Juliana had rented a house there so that her mother could rest for several weeks. Roosevelt came up to pay his respects to Queen Wilhelmina, bringing with him Princess Martha of Norway. Juliana had already visited the Roosevelts twice, and went with her mother to Hyde Park. In her memoirs, Queen Wilhelmina has written:

"To me everything was new, and meeting the President and Mrs. Roosevelt was an experience, although even at the first meeting with him I felt as if I was addressing an old friend, so cordial were his feelings for the Netherlands and for Juliana, Bernhard, the children and me.

"My respect and admiration had not only been aroused by my correspondence with him and the messages he had sent me; even more, perhaps, had I been impressed by his 'fireside chats' (to which I could listen regularly at Stubbings [in England] at 3 a.m.) and his statesmanship, first as a sympathizing neutral, then as an ally in the war. Meeting him, one was impressed by his strong personality, his willpower and perseverance, which had been steeled by his courage in dealing with the consequences of the poliomyelitis which had struck him years before. One felt certain that he would never yield and never abandon a cause he considered just, but would persevere in battle until he had attained his goal."³⁸

Roosevelt had already formed a warm, informal relationship with Princess Juliana, as he had with other royalty in exile during the war, but was apprehensive about the Queen. The President rather dreaded her visit "because of stories of her stiff and stern ways which have preceded her," one of Roosevelt's secretaries, William Hassett, noted in his diary. "From the members of her entourage come stories of their . . . fear of her arbitrary ways." But the President's closest adviser, Harry Hopkins, reported that she had been pleasant and gracious to him in London, and so she was with Roosevelt. First they had tea in Lee, then she came to Hyde Park. "The Boss said he liked her," wrote Hassett, ". . . and that the picnic was very enjoyable."³⁴

In August 1942, Queen Wilhelmina visited President Roosevelt

in Washington, and accepted a 173-foot submarine chaser bearing her name upon behalf of the Netherlands navy. It was a felicitous ceremony. Roosevelt declared:

"From the earliest days of history, the people of The Netherlands—your people—have been willing to fight for their freedom and independence. They have won out in the face of great odds.

"Once more they are fighting for that independence. Once more they will win and maintain it."

Queen Wilhelmina in her response to Roosevelt remarked, "May your love of the sea and of seamanship pervade this vessel and inspire those on board."

While she was in Washington, the Queen also appeared and spoke briefly at one of Roosevelt's press conferences and addressed a joint session of Congress. Her visit was so successful that a year later she returned to the United States and again was a guest of the President.³⁵

Roosevelt continued to write to Wilhelmina as to a dear friend, and acted as a warm patron to Princess Juliana and her husband. When, in January 1943, a third daughter, Margriet, was born to them, they asked Roosevelt to be the godfather. That fall Roosevelt wrote Prince Bernhard: "Juliana and the children were at Hyde Park for three days and I have completely fallen in love with my Godchild—the very best behaved baby I have ever seen. She took to me at once and she was brought to my room in the mornings when I was having my breakfast, and she was perfectly happy playing with a spoon."³⁶

Even in the spring of 1944, with his health declining, and planning for the imminent landing in France heavily occupying him, Roosevelt found time to write Juliana to offer her the use of his summer place at Campobello Island, New Brunswick. He described the main house and the simpler one next door with care, then like a benign older relative noted: "We are not using either of the houses this Summer and it is the kind of a location, with very few neighbors, where it would be really impossible to rent the houses. Therefore, they are yours to occupy, and, because we are both Dutch, the terms would be extremely simple—no rent."³⁷

As for Queen Wilhelmina, Roosevelt continued to correspond with her, despite his failing physical condition. In late March 1945, with the war winding to an end in Europe and the liberation of the Netherlands underway, Roosevelt expressed his delight over her "flying visit to a little piece of the Netherlands." Food for Europe was in short supply, he warned her, but he had instructed General Eisenhower to channel as much as possible to Amsterdam. "You can be very certain that I shall not forget the country of my origin," he assured her.³⁸

Three weeks later, Roosevelt died at Warm Springs, Georgia. It was not unexpected, Queen Wilhelmina has written. Juliana had



(TOP) The Roosevelts welcome Queen Wilhelmina to Washington, August 5, 1942

(BOTTOM) The Roosevelts entertain Princess Juliana at a picnic lunch at Mrs. Roosevelt's Val-Kill cottage, Hyde Park, New York, October 9, 1943
(*Courtesy of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library*)

seen him that March and had been shocked at the change in his appearance. Wilhelmina remembered her last long weekend with him at Hyde Park in the summer of 1943. Her recollections are a poignant memorial to the personal relationship, and to the Dutchness of Franklin D. Roosevelt:

"How well I remember Roosevelt taking me round his estate in a car with exclusively hand-operated controls, and how visibly he enjoyed driving his own car. He also took me to the station in it; I can still see him waving to me from his car as the train moved out. His last words contained good wishes for the resurrection of the Netherlands who held such a special place in his heart and for us all."³⁹

N O T E S

- 1 The lineage of both Roosevelts is traced in Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd, ed., *Burke's Presidential Families of the United States of America* (London, 1975), pp. 421, 503. Howard K. Beale, "T.R.'s Ancestry: A Study in Heredity," *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, October 1954, pp. 196-205, is indispensable, since it examines all of TR's ancestors, not merely the male line as in Burke. Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The Roosevelt Family in New Amsterdam before the Revolution," Roosevelt mss., Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. All manuscripts hereafter cited are from the Roosevelt Library. The writer wishes to express his appreciation to Dr. William Emerson, director of the Roosevelt Library, Mark Renovitch of the Roosevelt Library staff, and Ms. Jean Coberly, History Department head, Seattle Public Library, for their invaluable aid in his research.
- 2 Theodore Roosevelt, *An Autobiography* (Vol. XXII of *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt*, New York, 1925), pp. 3-5; Beale, "T.R.'s Ancestry," pp. 197-204-
- 3 T. Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, p. 3.
- 4 Burke, *Presidential Families*, p. 421.
- 5 Beale, "T.R.'s Ancestry," p. 197.
- 6 T. Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, pp. 4-5; Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, New York, 1979), p. 37.
7. Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Apprenticeship* (Boston, 1952). P-5-
- 8 F. D. Roosevelt, "The Roosevelt Family in New Amsterdam before the Revolution"; Elliott Roosevelt, ed., *F.D.R.: His Personal Letters, Early Years* (New York, 1947), p. 464 (hereafter cited as PL). FDR wrote the thesis in a course in American History to 1783 taught by Professor Edward Channing. He wrote his mother: "I have been in the library constantly looking up old records, but nothing much is to be found. Do please copy for me all the extracts in our old Dutch Bible & send them to me. Also the old brown genealogy which you have, a pamphlet, & any other records you have."

- 9 F. D. Roosevelt, "Roosevelt Family"; Allen Churchill, *The Roosevelts of New York: American Aristocrats* (New York, 1965), pp. 30-31. Other useful studies of the Roosevelts are Bellamy Partridge, *The Roosevelt Family in America* (New York, 1936), and Karl Schriftgiesser, *The Amazing Roosevelt Family, 1613-1942* (New York, 1942). For a brief account of FDR's ancestors, see Freidel, *Roosevelt*, pp. 6-15.
- 10 FDR to Philip Slomowitz, March 7, 1935, cited in Freidel, *Roosevelt*, p.6.
- 11 FDR to C. Heystek, June 7, 1932, Family, Business, and Personal File, #115. Hereafter cited as FBP File.
- 12 "In the Cradle of the Roosevelts," President's Secretary's File, #62. Hereafter cited as PSF.
- 13 FDR to Grenville T. Emmet, March 7, 1936, PSF #19, cited in *F.D.R.: His Personal Letters, 1928-1945* (New York, 1950), II, 1567-68. Hereafter cited as *PL 1928-1945*. Churchill, *Roosevelts of New York*, p. 2.
- 14 Churchill, *Roosevelts of New York*, pp. 30-47.
- 15 Freidel, *Roosevelt*, pp. 6-7; Churchill, *Roosevelts of New York*, pp. 48-61; F. D. Roosevelt, "Roosevelt Family."
- 16 F. D. Roosevelt, "Roosevelt Family."
- 17 Washington Irving, *A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*, by Diedrich Knickerbocker (Vol. I of *The Works of Washington Irving*, New York, 1860); Martin Roth, *Comedy and America: The Lost World of Washington Irving* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1976), pp. 114-54.
- 18 FDR to Stephen Early, October 19, 1939, *PL 1928-1945*, II, 942.
- 19 St. Nicholas Society of the City of New York, *Genealogical Record* (New York, 1905); FDR, "Preserve the Pictures of Old Landmarks," *De Halve Maen*, April 1923; Holland Society correspondence, Group 14.
- 20 Helen Wilkinson Reynolds, *Dutch Houses in the Hudson River Valley before 1776* (New York, 1929), introductory pages not numbered.
- 21 Not everyone shared FDR's enthusiasm for construction in Dutch colonial fieldstone. Roosevelt at the dedication of the Rhinebeck post office in 1939 said: "We are seeking to follow the type of architecture which is good in the sense that it does not of necessity follow the whims of the moment but seeks an artistry that ought to be good, as far as we can teil, for all time to come." But during World War II when FDR drove Princess Juliana to see the site at which a Rhinebeck high school was to be built, he impeded construction of the building. Rhinebeck residents, staunchly Republican, circulated the rumor that he was insisting upon another fieldstone building. His friend Olin Dows writes: "This gossip added materially to the difficulties in getting the community to vote for a much needed building." Olin Dows, *Franklin Roosevelt at Hyde Park* (New York, 1949), pp. 111-12.
- 22 Hannah W. Catlin to FDR, May 24, 1922, enclosing memorandum, FBP File, #59.
- 23 Franklin D. Roosevelt, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (13 vols.; New York, 1938-50), IV, 41-42.

- 24 Elting E. Morison et al., eds., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* (8 vols.; Cambridge, Mass., 1951-54), III, 16.
- 25 TR to George Otto Trevelyan, October 1, 1911, in Morison, *Letters*, III, 383-84, 391.
- 26 Morison, *Letters*, VIII, 135.
- 27 Interview with Marley F. Hay, April 1950, Oral History Project, Columbia University, cited in Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Ordeal* (Boston, 1954), p. 135.
- 28 FDR to Cordell Hull, November 11, 1939, *PL, 1928-1945*, II, 952; Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (2 vols.; New York, 1948), pp. 712-13.
- 29 FDR to Cordell Hull, November 11, 1939, *PL, 1928-1945*, II, 952-53.
- 30 FDR to Queen Wilhelmina, December 19, 1939, *PL, 1928-1945*, II, 971.
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- 32 FDR to Queen Wilhelmina, May 18, 1940, *PL, 1928-1945*, II, 1027.
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- 34 Wilhelmina, *Lonely*, pp. 180-81; William D. Hassett, *Off the Record with FDR, 1942-1945* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1958), pp. 87, 91.
- 35 Roosevelt, *Public Papers and Addresses*, 1942, pp. 322-23.
- 36 FDR to Prince Bernhard, October 12, 1943, *PL, 1928-1945*, II, 1452.
- 37 FDR to Princess Juliana, May 20, 1944, PSF, #62.
- 38 FDR to Queen Wilhelmina, March 21, 1945, PSF, #62, cited in *PL, 1928-1945*, II, 1576-77.
- 39 Wilhelmina, *Lonely*, p. 189.

John Lothrop Motley and the Netherlands

O. D. EDWARDS

IT is fitting—indeed, supremely fitting—that a study of John Lothrop Motley (1814-77) should begin with a superlative: his admirers and adversaries would be largely at one on that. Here it is: The case of Motley's historical writing on the Netherlands would seem to be unique in the force and nature of its initial impact in international cultural relations. There are, happily, innumerable examples of historians of one country making the history of another their professional life's work. Often the result of their work will be to awaken readers limited to the language in which they write to interest and excitement respecting the country under investigation where hitherto ignorance and indifference were the only reactions. But seldom if ever can the thing have been as violent as it was in Motley's case. When *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* was published in 1856, the Dutch historical profession possessed a science and a sophistication superior to historical scholarship in the English-speaking countries, but its achievements were virtually unknown to them. The *Edinburgh Review*, in a lengthy article for January on Motley's book and Prescott's *Philip II*, alluded with assurance, knowledge, and respect to the archival publication, editing, and commentary of Groen van Prinsterer, but the anonymous review was the work of Guizot, who was to translate and introduc  Motley for a French audience. Robert Jacobus Fruin, who has been termed the Ranke of the Netherlands, had to wait until the twentieth century for even fragmentary translation into English, and his lengthy, kindly, and devastating commentaries on Motley never reached an English-speaking readership at all. A few readers in the British Isles and North America would have seen the translation of Schiller's unfinished *Revolt of the Netherlands*, led to it perhaps by the characteristic vehemence with which it is trumpeted in Carlyle's *Life of Schiller*; fewer would have looked at Watson's eighteenth-century work which provided the chief source for