

Peter Minuit (also known as Pierre Minuyt) was 46 years old when he arrived in "New Netherland" on the 4th of May, 1626. He was the colony's first official director general.



One of his initial tasks was to gather the Dutch colonists together in one place, so they would be more secure. The Dutch West India Company, for whom Minuit worked, authorized him to buy land for the colony.

Searching for a good spot, Minuit settled on Manhattan Island. It had lots of land, which could be used for farming and pasturing, and was surrounded by water.

History books tell us that Minuit bought Manhattan Island for sixty guilders' worth of goods, although the details of the actual transaction are not documented in a contract.

There is a compelling piece of evidence, from the Dutch point of view. It's a letter, from November of 1626, discussing the purchase and noting the price of "60" guilders.

Tim McNeese, in his book *New Amsterdam*, tells us how the Native Americans would have likely viewed the deal:

But did an actual purchase even take place as far as the Native Americans themselves were concerned? There are no documents to tell the Manhattans' side of the story.

Modern-day descendants say no such "purchase" would have taken place. The Manhattans of the 1600s likely agreed to accept gifts from the Dutch in exchange for allowing the colonists, farmers, and traders to use the land, not purchase it. The Manhattans would not have considered land something they had a right to "sell." (New Amsterdam, at page 68.)

Whether it was purchased by right of deed - as we would buy land today - or by some other means of land use, Manhattan Island quickly became the center of activity for the colonists of New Netherland.

In this clip—from "The New York Connection," a Dutch public-television series—we see the legendary place where Minuit made his deal with Native Americans.

The host of the program is Dirk van Weelden, a Dutch author. He is speaking Dutch—the language of those early colonists. This clip gives us an opportunity to hear what was once a commonly spoken language in today's New York (and gives us the source of the island's name).

Credits:

Clip - from Episode 1 of "The New York Connection," a Dutch public-television series - online, courtesy idtvdocs' channel at YouTube.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Peter-Minuit-Purchase-of-Manhattan-Island1>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Peter-Minuit-Purchase-of-Manhattan-Island1>

Media Stream



Peter Minuit

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/>