

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 8, 2015



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A different pilgrim story

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Each year at Thanksgiving time we are usually very mindful of our brave English forefathers who risked life and limb to cross the ocean in search of freedom and opportunity. We remember the our Native ancestors, too, without whom the English wouldn't have survived. What we often forget, however, is that the Great Pilgrim Migration, as it is known, lasted from 1620 to 1640, and included a great many non-English pilgrims. Quite a few of them were Dutch, and the Mayflower was only the beginning.

This past week marked three years since Hurricane Sandy struck an area along the coast of New Jersey, but this region is no stranger to catastrophe. Long, long before it became known as Sandy Hook, this little spit of land was a part of the New Netherlands colony called Sant Hoek. Like Plimouth Plantation, Sandy Hook hosted its own set of Pilgrims.

What happened there well over three centuries ago changed the face of America, Kentucky included. This is the Sandy Hook Thanksgiving story.

A Perilous Journey

In 1640, a pair of newly wed Dutch pilgrims set sail for the New Amsterdam colony (present day New York) from the Netherlands. Along the way, the new bride would become a young widow and survive an unimaginably difficult set of circumstances, going on to become a successful businesswoman in the New World.

Eighteen-year-old Penelope Van Princis and her new husband, John Kent, harbored a dream. Leaving their home in the Amsterdam of the Olde World, they hoped to plant a life together in the Amsterdam of this new one. However, during the voyage, John became gravely ill, and to make matters worse the ship foundered near the shore at Sant Hoek along the New Netherlands coastline.

Fearing nearby hostile Indians, the passengers quickly abandoned ship, while some of the men carried John into the darkness of the nearby woods. Determined to finish the journey on foot, Penelope's fellow travelers tried convincing her to go with them, but she refused. John was near death, and Penelope would not leave him to die alone on an unknown continent.

Bidding her a prayerful farewell, the others promised to send a rescue as soon as they reached New Amsterdam. As the sound of their footfalls faded into the forest, Penelope wondered if both she and John had sailed straight into their doom.

Almost immediately, hostile natives attacked the young couple without mercy. They slaughtered Penelope's beloved John even as she lay dying quite well enough without their assistance. They'd left her as good as dead, too – scalped and skull fractured, with one arm nearly sheared from her shoulder and her abdomen viciously sliced open.

A Fight To Survive

And what now? It was one week later and miraculously, Penelope had managed to survive thus far. Shivering in the moonlight, she limped her way back to the hollow tree that had served as her fortress for the past several days. She tore off a bit of the tree's inner bark and slowly chewed until it was soft enough to swallow. Then she painfully wriggled herself back into its empty core, intending to remain there, praying, until the Lord took her.

When she next awoke the sun was up, although the dew still lay heavily on the low scrub near the forest floor. Penelope heard a rustling sound to one side, but from her position within the tree she couldn't see what was making the noise. Instinctively, she shrank further into the hollow, but then gathered a wisp of strength to peak out from the shadows.



Laura Hunt Angel photos

Hachee is a Dutch favorite made with chunks of beef and onions in a savory pepper gravy.

It was a deer, shot through with several arrows and nearly as weak as she herself was. Determined, Penelope crawled out from her nest to lay down beside the wounded animal and pray that the Indian who had shot it would soon put them both out of their misery.

Not long after, a pair of Lenapi tribesmen approached from deeper in the forest and spied her lying near their prey. One was an elder, the other a much younger hunter. She motioned for them to please, shoot her through with one of their arrows to release her from her suffering. The younger warrior was obliged to do so and raised his club over his head, but the older man stayed the younger one's hand.

Enfolding Penelope in his mantle, the old Indian picked her up and gently carried her to his abode, where he nursed her back to as good a health as could be. Given the severity of the wound to her shoulder, the arm clinging to it would never be of much use.

A New Life

When she was well enough, the old man took Penelope to the New Amsterdam colony and presented her to the settlers there, who paid him handsomely for her return. Not long after, Penelope met an English soldier named Richard Stout. In 1644 the two were wed, and Penelope bore Richard a total of ten children.

Penelope went on to establish the East Jersey settlement, single handedly maneuvering the land transaction between the settlers and the Lenapi tribal elders which included the old man who had rescued her. Some time later and again with the help of the Lenapi elder, Penelope warned the settlers of an impending Indian attack and saved the entire colony.

The Stout family eventually settled in Middletown, New Jersey, not far from where her rescuer lived. The old Indian eventually became a chief and visited Penelope now and then. The two remained friends throughout his lifetime.

Penelope died in 1732 in Monmouth County, New Jersey, at the age of 110. At that time her descendants numbered 502. Like Penelope, successive generations of her family continued to have large broods with exceptional lifespans.

Prior to the Revolutionary War, many of Penelope's progeny headed to the Carolina colony.



Laura Hunt Angel photo

Red cabbage with apples and bacon is popular in the Netherlands, Germany and much of western Europe.

When the war ended and westward expansion began in earnest, many of this brave lady's kin ventured to the deep woods of Kentucky, and from there to all points west.

The Recipes

The story of Penelope Van Princis Stout is just one reason to honor the Dutch by including some traditional favorites this Thanksgiving season. Additionally, many Dutch dishes are nearly identical to German favorites with flavors we are familiar with and sure to please family and guests.

Slow Cooker Hachee

My German sister-in-law regularly makes a stove top version of hachee, minus the extra spices. The original calls for using whole juniper berries, peppercorns and cloves, but the idea of biting down on a whole clove was unappealing to me so I used ground cloves, and coarsely crushed berries and peppercorns. Serve this hearty, hunter style dish over mashed potatoes, noodles or German spaetzle.

2 pounds (about 6 medium) yellow onions
¼ cup olive oil or melted butter
2 pounds beef stew meat
1/2 cup flour
4 cups beef broth or water
2-3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
2 bay leaves

¼ teaspoon ground cloves
4 juniper berries, crushed
8 whole black peppercorns, crushed
¾ teaspoon salt, or to taste
Additional black pepper, to taste

Halve and slice the onions and lay them in the bottom of a slow cooker. In a large bowl, coat the beef with the oil or melted butter. Sprinkle the flour over the meat and toss; place the beef over the onions in the slow cooker. Pour the broth or water and vinegar over all and add the spices. Cook on low for about 8 hours or until the beef is very tender. Remove the bay leaves, correct seasonings and give it all a good stir before serving. About 6 servings.

Rode Kool met Appeltjes (Red Cabbage with Apples)

This refreshing fall side dish wasn't served at the first Thanksgiving, but should have been because it's just that good. Serve this along with Hachee for a complete Dutch style meal.

4 slices thick cut bacon
1 medium red cabbage
1 small onion
2 tablespoons brown sugar
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1/2 cup red wine (or cider)
1/2 teaspoon apple pie spice
2 cooking apples, such as Rome or Granny Smith
Salt and pepper to taste

Dice the bacon and fry in a large skillet. Using a slotted spoon, remove



wikipedia photo

One of two commemorative coins memorializing Penelope Van Princis Stout. This one depicts her rescue by the Lenapi Elder.

the bacon pieces but reserve the grease. Coarsely chop the onion and saute in the bacon grease until soft. Meantime, rinse the cabbage, remove any wilted leaves and cut in half. Cut each half into 1/4" slices. Add the peels on, slice them into medium-sized wedges; add the apples to the cabbage, stirring gently. Simmer about 45 minutes or until the cabbage and apples are soft; season with salt and pepper to taste. Serves 4-6.