Title:
Laws and Ordinances of New Netherland, 1638-1674

Additional Information:
Fulltext in Google Books

Table of Contents:
ORDINANCE

Content:
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Of the Director and Council of New Netherland establishing a Board of Nine Men. Passed 25 September, 1647.
[N. Y. Colonial MSS. IV. 334.]

Petrus Stuyvesant, on behalf of the High and Mighty Lords States General, his Serene Highness the Prince of Orange and the Honble Directors of the General Incorporated West India Company of the United Netherlands, Director general of New Netherland and the Curacao islands, Captain and Commander in Chief of the said Company's Ships and Yachts in this Northern part of America; together with the Honble Council.

To all those who shall read, or hear these Presents read, Greeting:

Whereas We, pursuant to Our Commission and general Instruction, desire, wish or require nothing else but that this government of New Netherland entrusted to Us, and especially this Our Capital and residence, New Amsterdam, may grow and advance in good order, justice, police, population, prosperity and mutual peace and improvement; be provided and furnished with a proper and strong Fort, a Church, Sheet-piling, Pier and similar highly necessary public and common works and buildings, whereunto We, in pursuance of our concurrent Instruction, are commanded to solicit the coöperation of the Commonalty, as such concerns their own welfare and defence, and is customary in all well ordered Governments, Colonies and Places; Yet, however, being disinclined to burthen and oppress, by virtue of our granted Commission and Instruction, the good and peaceable Commonalty, our dear Vassals and Subjects, by exactions, impositions and intolerable taxes, but rather to induce and solicit them, by a more reasonable manner of consent, to lend a helping hand in such honorable and most necessary works; And whereas it is difficult to bring so many heads under one capoch, or so many votes into one voice, We have, by the advice of our Council, heretofore proposed and submitted to the Commonalty that they, without passion or hatred or envy, select twice the number of Nine persons from the most notable, most reasonable, most honorable and most respectable of our Subjects, in order that a single number of Nine persons may be chosen and appointed from them to confer, as Selectmen, with us and our Council, on the subject of such approval and coöperative means, and to assist, to the best of their knowledge and information, in promoting and forwarding the welfare both of the Commonalty and of the Commonwealth; whereunto, then, on the day aforesaid, a double number being selected by our dear subjects, the good Commonalty, are by Us and our Council therewith chosen, to wit:

From the Merchants — Augustyn Heerman, Arnoldus van Hardenberch, and Govert Loockermans;

From the Burghers — Jan Jansen Damen, Jacob Wolphertsen and Hendrick Kip;

From the Farmers — Machiel Jansen, Jan Evertsen Bout and Thomas Hall, as Spokesmen for the Commonalty, who having taken the oath of fidelity to Us and the Honble Council to regulate and govern themselves in conformity to reason and the Orders and Instructions yet to be given, are hereby confirmed in their abovementioned quality, nuder the following Rules:

First. That they as good Spokesmen and Agents of the Commonalty will aim at, and as far as lies their power, help to promote the honor of God and welfare of our dear Fatherland, the greatest advantage of the Company and the prosperity of the worthy Commonalty here, and the advancement of the pure Reformed Religion as taught at this day in the Church here and in Netherland.

Second. That they shall not set up and form any private Conventicles and Meetings, much less consultations and
resolutions, without the knowledge and advice of the Director General and his Council, or without his special and particular Order, except only, when legally convened and having heard the proposals of the Honble Director General and Council, they can adjourn and take a recess in order to confer with each other upon, and to consider such proposals and thereafter to give advice: Provided, nevertheless, that the Director General retains the power to commission himself or some one of the Council to act as President at such our consultations and deliberations, to collect the votes and to make a report to the Council.

Third. Whereas in consequence of the increase of the Inhabitants, Lawsuits and disputes which parties bring against each other, are multiplied, and also divers questions and quarrels of trifling moment, which can be determined and disposed of by Arbitrators, but, in consequence of matters of greater importance, frequently remain over and undecided, to the prejudice and injury of this place and the good people thereof, and also to the great expence, loss of time and vexation of the contending parties, three out of those chosen shall have access once a week, on Thursday, the usual Burgher Court day, to our general Council as long as civil cases are before the Court in order to obtain a knowledge of the cases and parties who might be referred to them as Arbitrators and Good Men; to wit, one from the Merchants; one from the Burghers; one from the Farmers, which shall regularly rotate every month. And if one of them be indisposed or absent, he may subordinate another of the elected in his place; And parties referred by the Council to them as Arbitrators and Good Men and being judged shall remain bound to submit without opposition to the pronounced decision, or in default thereof be fined One pound Flemish for the first time, to be paid before the aggrieved party can appeal, or obtain a hearing before our Council from the decision of the Good Men.

Fourth. The number of the Nine elected Select Men shall continue until further Order and circumstances, saving that Six shall retire annually, and 12 picked out from the most qualified Inhabitants, which names shall be returned to us by the Nine Men assembled collegialiter without it being necessary to convene the entire Commonalty hereafter, which Meeting shall take place on the last of December following the next New Year's day and so every year afterwards.

Thus done and enacted in Council, 25 September A° 1647. (Signed) P. Stuyvesant, L. Van Dincklage, La Montagne, Brian Newton, Paulus Leendersen van die Grift and A. Keyser.