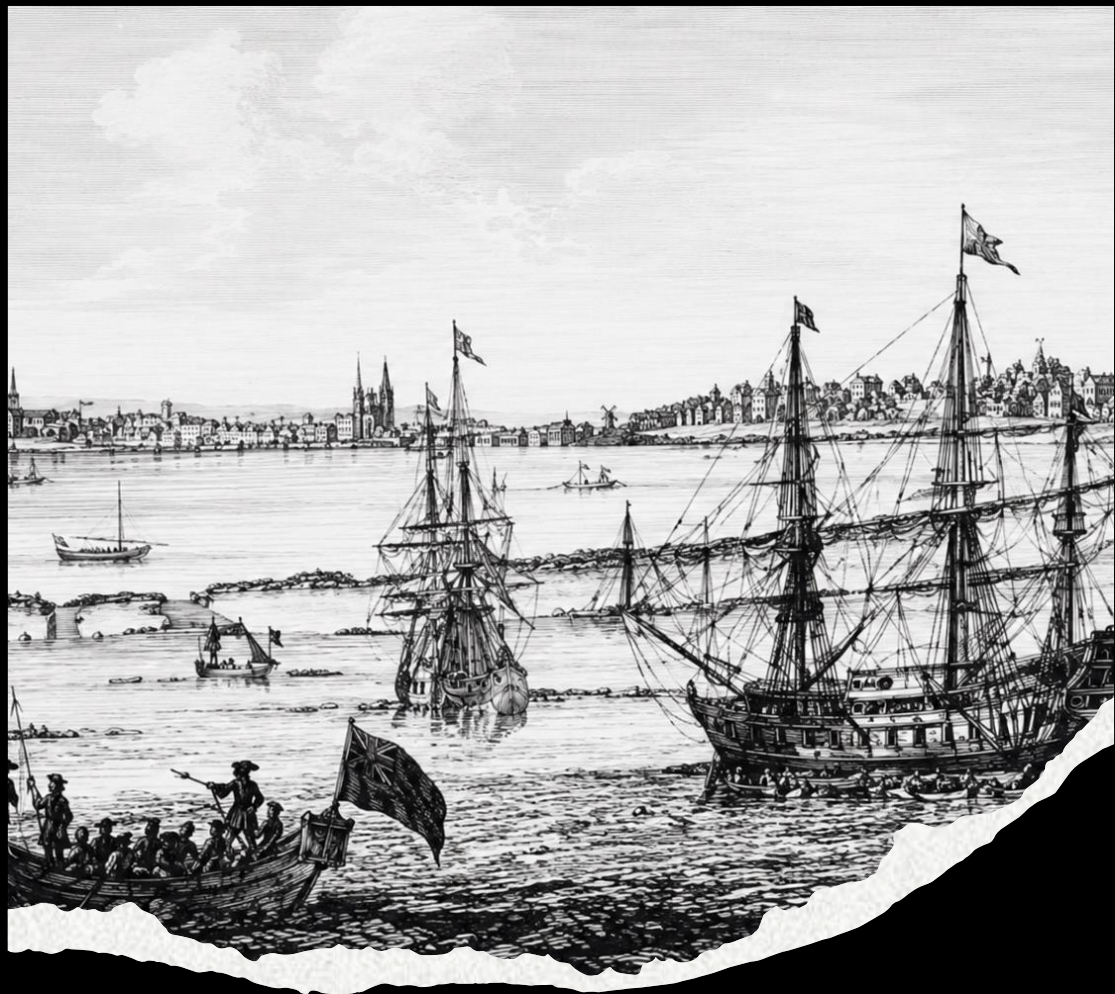




New Amsterdam, New York, and the Atlantic Jewish Diaspora



The Jewish Nation, living in this town of Amsterdam, humbly requests that your Honors kindly show compassion toward them on account of the miserable state that the occurrences in Brazil have brought about.

Your Honors well know and also will take into consideration that, when the first ambassador of the present King of Portugal came to these countries, it was said to us in his name that he brought with him full powers from his king to grant various privileges and favors to the Jewish Nation, by this means seeking to persuade them to return to his countries and Kingdom from where they had come. Thereupon the [Jewish] Nation gave as their answer, that they knew as their sovereign no one else but their High Mightinesses, and if he had something to propose in this respect he had to speak to them [their High Mightinesses].

Of this, your Honors were then informed by the Nation and your Honors were requested kindly to make special mention of this to their High Mightinesses the States[-General], so that in the event any agreements might be concluded with the said king(s), their High Mightinesses should kindly remember this [Jewish] Nation with the purpose of having them [the Jews] mentioned and considered in the same manner as the other burghers and residents of this town and provinces.

-- Amsterdam Parnasim to Mayors of Amsterdam, November 27, 1645



The special favor which they [the Jews] received from His Highness [their High Mightinesses, the States-General] has aroused the unspeakably great hatred of the Portuguese against the [Jewish] Nation. This hatred has grown even more fierce since our people of Brazil had the opportunity to discover and to warn the members of the Government about most of the treacheries of the Portuguese a long time before they actually took place. The Portuguese were thereupon so embittered against the Nation that they publicly proclaimed that no quarter would be given to our Nation. Already they have executed in cold blood thirteen persons whom they had captured and, as is said, have burned one alive.

Your Honors may please consider that this hate and enmity are long-standing and even now keep on multiplying on account of the loyalty and vigilance with which the Jews conduct themselves in truly trying to defend Brazil. For this end they expose their lives at considerable danger(s); as is shown by the fact that now more than forty persons have left for service in the Armada to fight against her [The Netherlands'] enemies. And unlike other nations, no one of the [Jewish] Nation, God be praised, has been swayed, either by gifts or promises, to join the enemy or run away.

-- Amsterdam Parnasim to Mayors of Amsterdam,
November 27, 1645

“That thei shall have Libertie of
Conscience with exercise of their
laws, rites and ceremonies ...
And that there shall bee given
them a convenient place ... to
build a Sinagoga or Sinagogas
and Schooles ... and also a place
for buriall.”

-- “Privileges Granted to the
People of the Hebrew Nation
That Are to Goe to the Wilde
Cust,” ca. 1654,





“The Jews who have arrived would nearly all like to remain here, but learning that they (with their customary usury and deceitful trading with the Christians) were very repugnant to the inferior magistrates, as also to the people having the most affection for you; the Deaconry also fearing that owing to their present indigence they might become a charge in the coming winter, we have, for the benefit of this weak and newly developing place and the land in general, deemed it useful to require them in a friendly way to depart; praying also most seriously in this connection, for ourselves as also for the general community of your worships, that the deceitful race, - such hateful enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ, - be not allowed further to infect and trouble this new colony, to the detraction of your worships and the dissatisfaction of your worships' most affectionate subjects.”

-- Peter Stuyvesant to the Amsterdam Chamber, September 22, 1654

1655, January

Petition of the Jewish Nation.

To the Honorable Lords, Directors of the Chartered West India Company, Chamber of the City of Amsterdam.

The merchants of the Portuguese Nation residing in this City respectfully remonstrate to your Honors that it has come to their knowledge that your Honors raise obstacles to the giving of permits or passports to the Portuguese Jews to travel and to go to reside in New Netherland, which if persisted in will result to the great disadvantage of the Jewish nation. It also can be of no advantage to the general Company but rather damaging.

There are many of the nation who have lost their possessions at Pernambuco and have arrived from there in great poverty, and part of them have been dispersed here and there. So that your petitioners had to expend large sums of money for their necessaries of life, and through lack of opportunity all cannot remain here to live. And as they cannot go to Spain or Portugal because of the Inquisition, a great part of the aforesaid people must in time be obliged to depart for other territories of their High Mightinesses the States-General and their Companies, in order there, through their labor and efforts, to be able to exist under the protection of the administrators of your Honorable Directors, observing and obeying your Honors' orders and commands.

It is well known to your Honors that the Jewish nation in Brazil have at all times been faithful and have striven to guard and maintain that place, risking for that purpose their possessions and their blood.



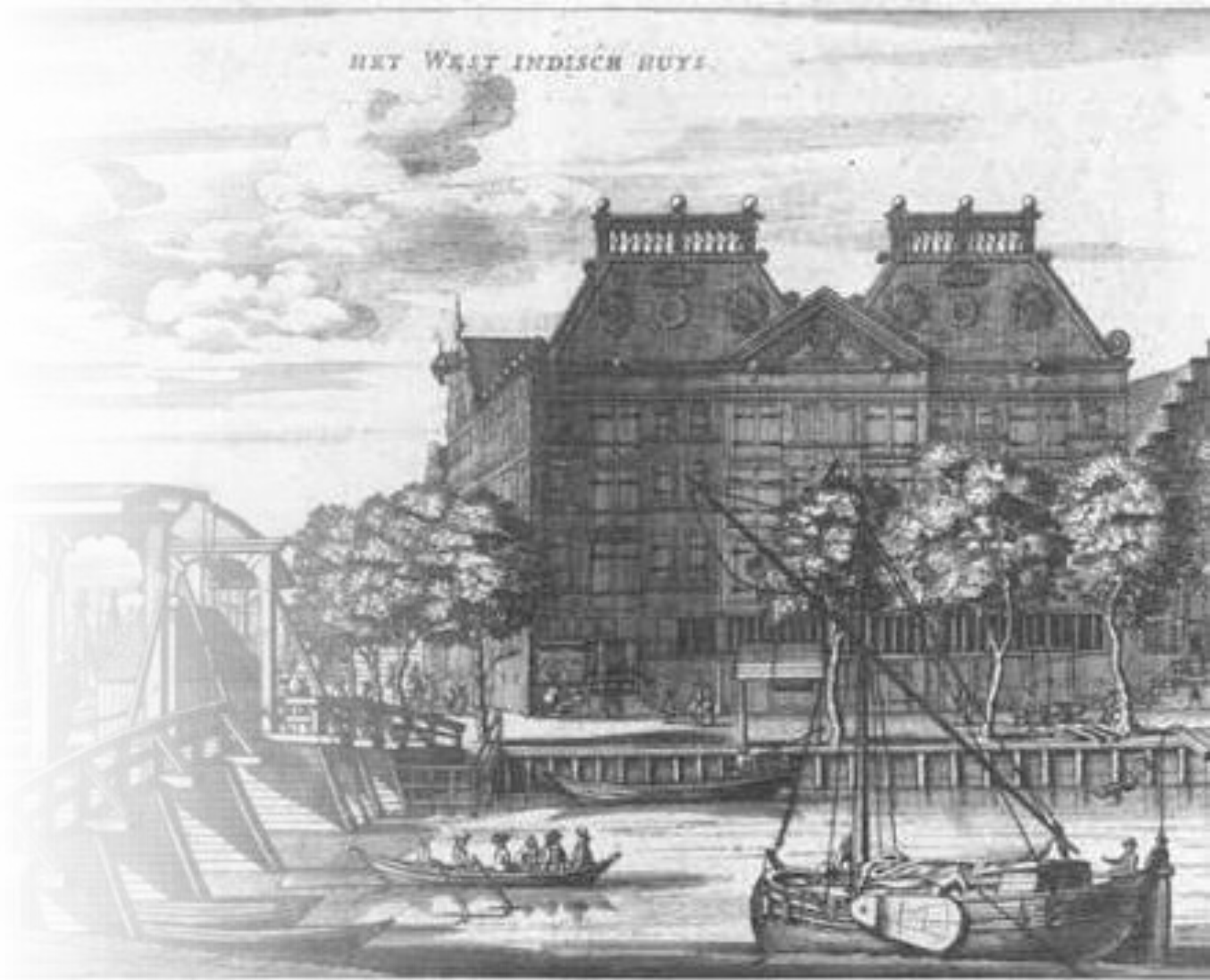
“We would have liked to effectuate and fulfill your wishes and request that the new territories should no more be allowed to be infected by people of the Jewish nation, for we foresee therefrom the same difficulties which you fear, but after having further weighed and considered the matter, we observe that this would be somewhat unreasonable and unfair, especially because of the considerable loss sustained by this nation, with others, in the taking of Brazil, as also because of the large amount of capital which they still have invested in the shares of this company. Therefore after many deliberations we have finally decided and resolved to apostille upon a certain petition presented by said Portuguese Jews that these people may travel and trade to and in New Netherland and live and remain there, provided the poor among them shall not become a burden to the company or to the community, but be supported by their own nation. You will now govern yourself accordingly.”

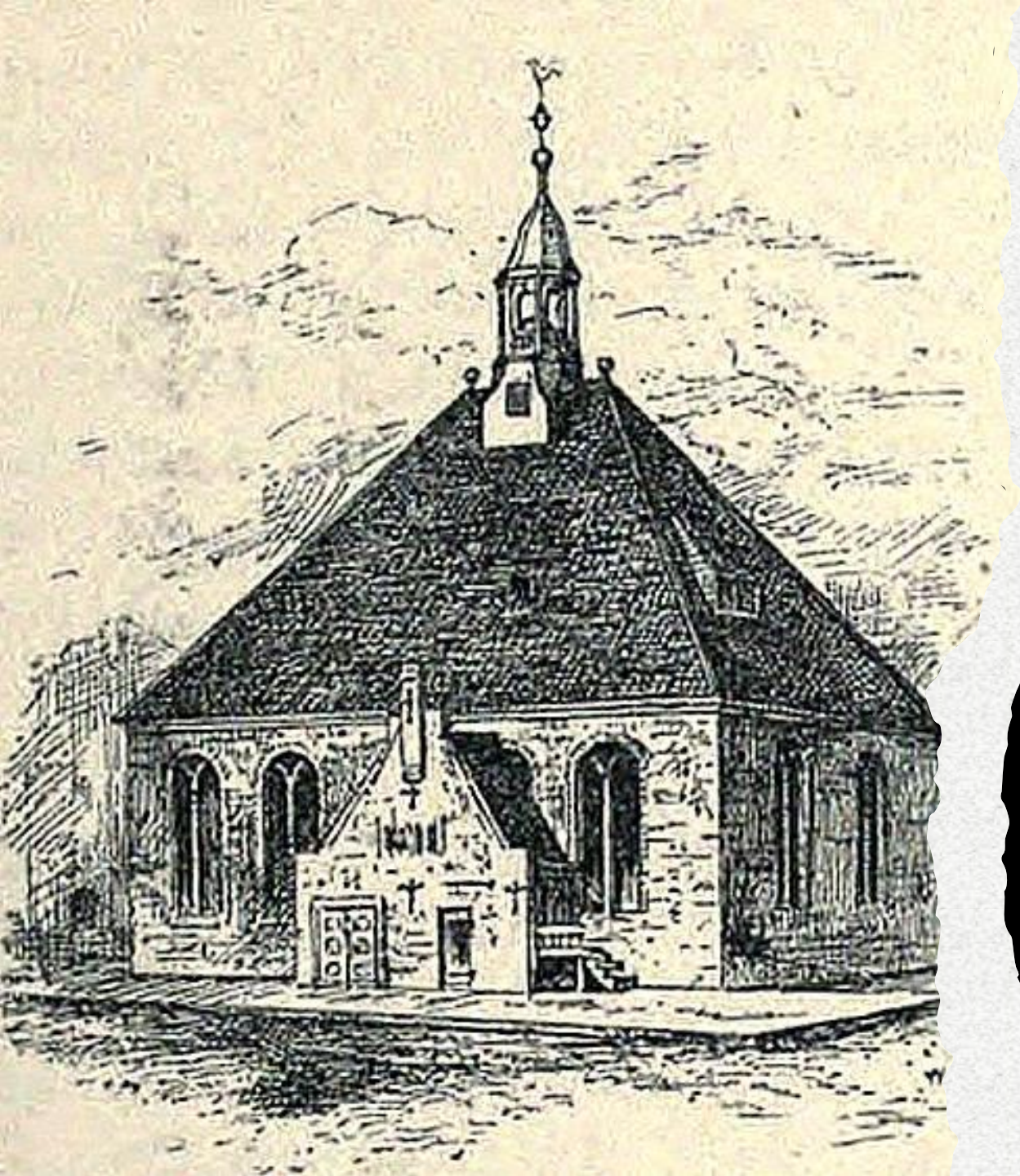
-- Directors of the Dutch West India Company to Peter Stuyvesant and Council, April 26, 1655



“The consent given to the Jews to go to New Netherland and there to enjoy the same liberty that is granted them in this country was extended with respect to civil and political liberties, without the said Jews becoming thereby entitled to a license to exercise and carry on their religion in synagogues or gatherings. So long, therefore, as no request is presented to you to allow such a free exercise of religion, any consideration relative thereto is too premature, and when later something shall be presented about it you will be doing well to refer the matter to us in order to await thereon the necessary orders.”

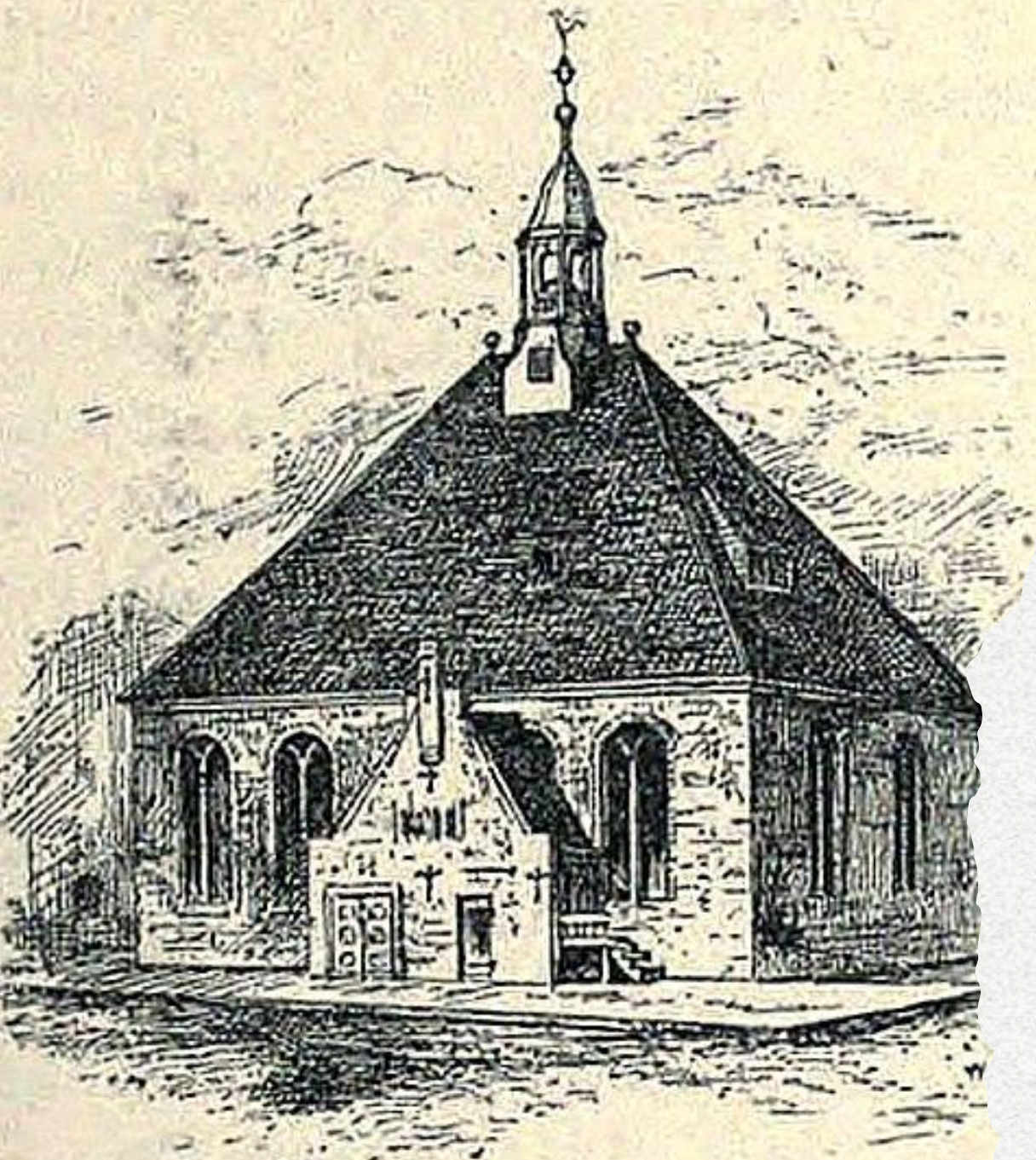
-- Directors of the Dutch West India Company to Peter Stuyvesant, March 13, 1656





“The followers of the unrighteous Mammon aimed to get possession of Christian property and to outdo other merchants by drawing all trade toward themselves. These godless rascals ... may be sent away from here.”

-- Rev. Johannes Megapolensis to the Classis of Amsterdam, March 18, 1655



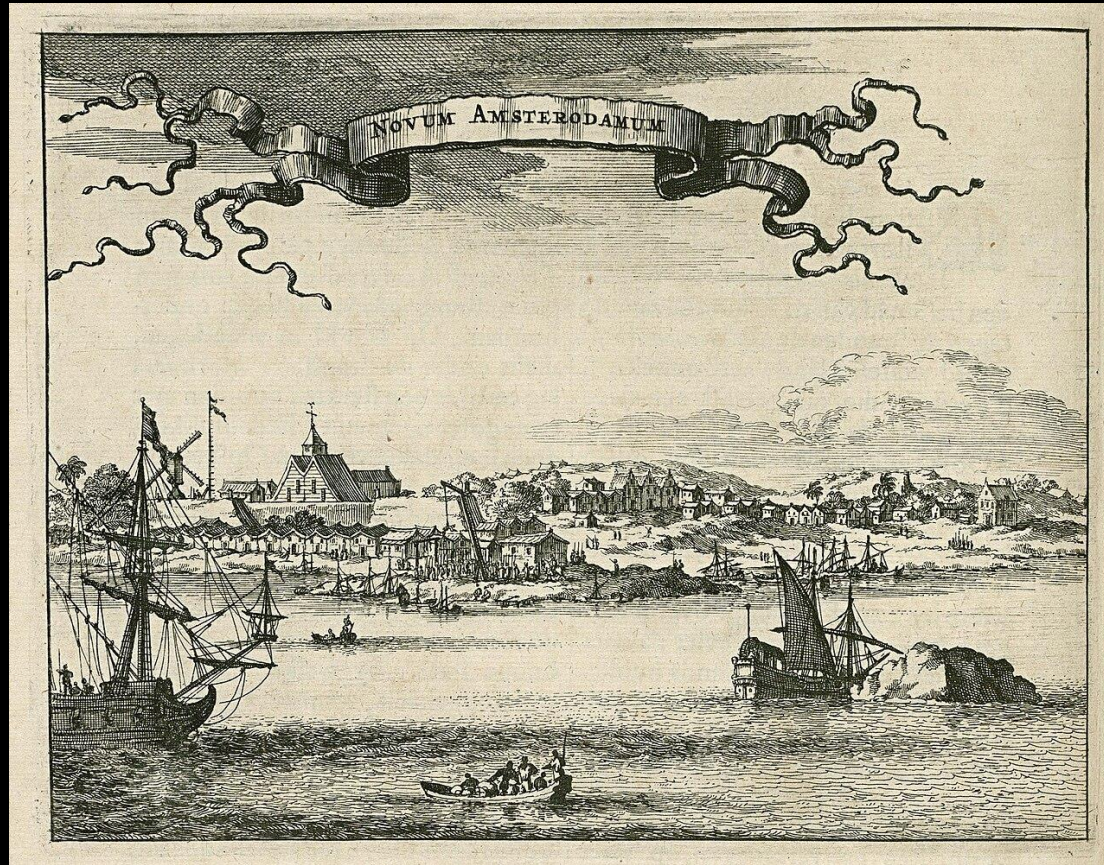
“We suppose they went to Rhode Island; for that is the receptacle of all sorts of riff-raff people, and is nothing else than the sewer (latrina) of New England. All the cranks of New England retire thither ... We perceive from this circumstance that the devil is the same everywhere... The same instruments which he uses to disturb the churches in Europe, he employs here in America... [to] bring to nothing these machinations of Satan.”

-- Johannes Megapolensis and Samuel Drisius to the Classis of Amsterdam, August 14, 1657



“Considering the Jewish nation with regard to trade, they are not hindered, but trade with the same privilege and freedom as other inhabitants. Also, they have many times requested of us the free and public exercise of their abominable religion, but this cannot yet be accorded to them. What they may be able to obtain from your Honors time will tell.”

-- Peter Stuyvesant to the Directors of the Dutch West India Company, June 10, 1656



“We have here seen and learned with displeasure, that your Honors, against our apostille of the 15th of February, 1655, granted to the Jewish or Portuguese nation at their request, have forbidden them to trade at Fort Orange and South River, and also the purchase of real estate, which is allowed them here in this country without any difficulty, and we wish that this had not occurred but that your Honors had obeyed our orders which you must hereafter execute punctually and with more respect. Jews or Portuguese people, however, shall not be permitted to establish themselves as mechanics (which they are not allowed to do in this city), nor allowed to have open retail shops, but they may quietly and peacefully carry on their business as heretofore and exercise in all quietness their religion within their houses, for which end they must without doubt endeavor to build their houses close together in a convenient place on one or the other side of New Amsterdam - at their choice - as they have done here.”

-- Directors of the Dutch West India Company to Peter Stuyvesant, June 14, 1656



“I may obtaine here for my Nation the Liberty of a free and publick Synagogue, wherein we may daily call upon the Lord our God ... and besides to sue also for a blessing upon this Nation, and People of England, for receiving us into their bosomes.”

-- Menasseh ben Israel, *To His Highnesse the Lord Protector ... The Humble Addresses of Menasseh Ben Israel*, 1655



“Can you really be afraid that this... despised people should be able to prevail in trade and credit over the merchants of England?”

-- Oliver Cromwell to opponents of Jewish readmission, Whitehall Conference, December 1655



September 29, 1664. Whereupon the City and Fort Amsterdam and Province of the New Netherlands were surrendered under His Most Excellent Mat's. Obedience, made and concluded the 27th. day of September 1664.

by the underwritten Commissioners of Richard Nichols Esquire Deputy Governor of His Royal Highness the Duke of York and Peter Stuyvesant in the name of the Estates Generals of the United Belgic Provinces and West India Company Governor of the said Town and fort and General of that Province and in that quality ratified, and by their subscription confirmed the 29th day of the above Month and year.

1. We consent that the States General, or the West India Company shall freely enjoy all farms & Houses (except such as are in the forts) and that within six months they shall have free Liberty to transport, all such arms and ammunition as now do belong to them, or else they shall be paid for them.
2. All public Houses shall continue for the uses, which now they are for.
3. All people shall continue free Denizens and enjoy their Lands, Houses, Goods, Ships, wherever they are within this Country, and dispose of them as they please.

-- *"Articles about the Transfer of New Netherland on the 27th of August, Old Style, Anno 1664."*

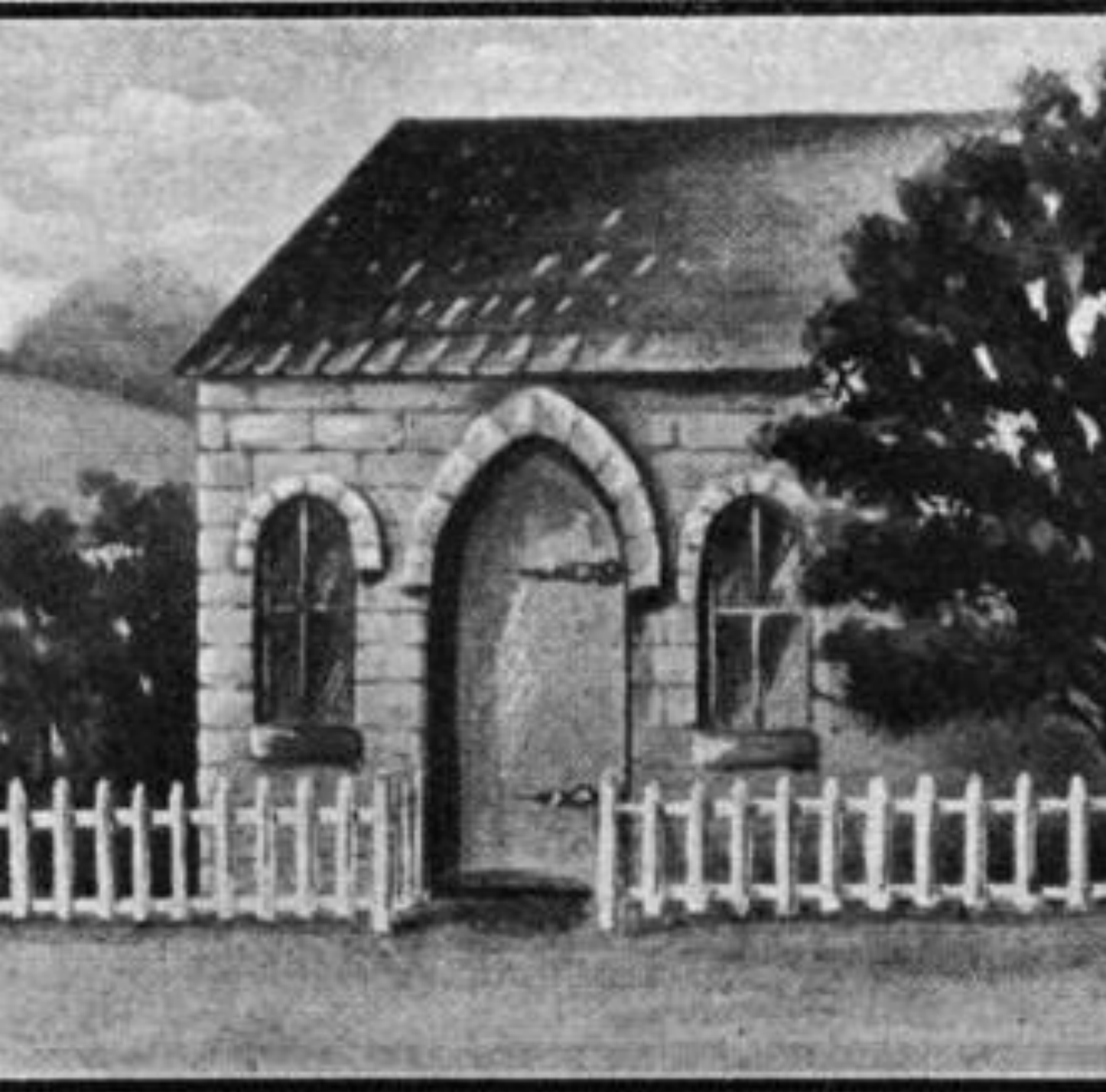
“It shall be permitted to the Jews to have freedom of conscience with public worship, and a synagogue and school ... without hindrance ... and that they shall enjoy all Liberties and Exemptions of our other colonists.”

-- 1659 Dutch land grant to David Nassy

“Our brethren in various quarters ... desire to settle in the colony,” but first seek to know “the condition of affairs there and how the Jews were treated.”

-- Petition of the Jewish community of Suriname to the Dutch governor, 1669, summarized and translated in Samuel Oppenheim, *An Early Jewish Colony in Western Guiana*





“And whereas the People professing the Jewish Religion may thereby be prevented from receiving the Benefit of this Act; Be it further enacted... That whenever any Person professing the Jewish Religion shall present himself to take the said Oath of Abjuration in pursuance of this Act, the said Words... ‘upon the true Faith of a Christian’ shall be omitted.”

-- British Plantation Act of 1740