

SWAN JANSE VAN LUANE A FREE BLACK IN 17th CENTURY KINGS COUNTY

BY HENRY B. HOFF, F.A.S.G., F.G.B.S.*

A success story of 17th century New York is that of Swan Janse van Luane. He arrived in New Amsterdam about 1654 as a slave.¹ Ten years or so later he was a free man; ten years after that he was a small landowner in Flatlands on Long Island. In 1680 he bought a farm of about 48 acres in adjacent New Utrecht for 2,000 guilders, which was approximately ten times a good annual salary in New York.² Many of his neighbors had farms of comparable size, but all of the neighbors belonged to large well-established Dutch families. Swan, on the other hand, had no family or in-laws to fall back on: he had no relatives here, his first wife was an orphan, and his second wife also had no relatives here. However, as will be seen, he must have been perceived as a good credit risk by his former master, Govert Loockermans, a leading merchant of New Amsterdam [which became New York City in 1664].

The first record of Swan was on 17 January 1662 when Andries Jochemszen, a New Amsterdam tavern keeper, was accused of keeping his tavern open during church services on Sunday and serving three customers, one of whom was Swan, slave of Govert Loockermans (RNA 4:9, 13, 22, 33, 41, 45).³ Two years later, on 9 February 1664, "Swan Van Loange and Christina Emanuels, Negroes" were betrothed at the New Amsterdam Dutch Church (MDC 29). She had been baptized there 18 February 1645 (BDC 18), daughter of Emanuel Trompetter. On 9 December 1663, two months before her betrothal, a petition was brought on her behalf for manumission from the service of the Dutch West India Company. The petition described her as the baptized orphan daughter

* 67 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

¹ His place of origin, given variously as Luane, Loange or Lowaanen, may have been Luanda in Angola, although Bergen suggests Sierra Leone for the origin of his name (KCo. 344).

² Information courtesy of Peter Christoph.

³ The masculine name Swan was relatively rare in New Netherland, but there was a contemporary black man named Swan Janse living in Manhattan who clearly was not identical with Swan Janse van Luane. The first definite mention of Swan Janse of Manhattan was on 6 July 1669 when Swaen Janszen and Anna Abrahams had a son Philip baptized at the New York Dutch Church (BDC 95). On 3 February 1672 Annatje, daughter of Swaen van Angola and Annetie Abrahams, was baptized there (BDC 104). He may also have been the father of Johannes, baptized there 14 June 1665 as child of Abraham Janszen and Annetje Abrahams (BDC 79), if "Abraham" was an error for "Swan." As "Swan Van Ankole" he was on the 1673 list of "negroes beyond the Fresh Water" on Manhattan (see Rec. 121:67 n. 2 for this list). In December 1680 Jan alias Swan, a Negro man, and his wife were complained of for keeping a disorderly house, selling drinks to Negroes, and entertaining them at unreasonable hours (Joyce D. Goodfriend, *Before the Melting Pot: Society and Culture in Colonial New York City, 1664-1730*, 1992, pp. 120, 255, citing Mayor's Court Minutes). This would appear to be Swan Janse of Manhattan, using the name Jan as an alternative first name. This conclusion would suggest, in turn, that Swan Janse of Manhattan was identical with "Jan Negro" who was betrothed 23 November 1663 to Annetje Abrahams at the New York Dutch Church (MDC 29) and was married to her 23 December 1663 at the Brooklyn Dutch Church (A.P.G. Jos van der Linde, ed. *Old First Dutch Reformed Church of Brooklyn, New York: First Book of Records, 1660-1752*, New York Historical Manuscripts: Dutch, 1983, p. 215). Note also the existence of a contemporary white man named Jan Swaen living in New Amsterdam between 1653 and 1664 (Icon. 2:290; MDC 18; BDC, *passim*).

of Manuel Trumpeter and Anthonya, his wife. She was manumitted on 16 September 1664 upon the submission of a note for 300 guilders by Govert Loockermans (CDM 256).

In *Journal of The Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society* [hereafter JAAHGS] 5:99-100, the eminent scholar, Joyce Goodfriend, concluded from these documents that Govert Loockermans had paid for Christina Emanuels' freedom so his slave [or former slave] Swan could marry her.

Swan evidently was freed by Govert Loockermans at some point, and he settled in Flatlands where his son Bernardus was born. He was assessed in Flatlands as Swaen Jansen in 1675 and 1676 (Peter R. and Florence A. Christoph, ed. *The Andros Papers . . . Files of the Provincial Secretary During the Administration of Governor Sir Edmund Andros 1674-1680*, 3 vols., 1989-91, 1: 509, 576). In July 1679 Swan and his wife Christina joined the New Utrecht Dutch Church (Flat.Fr.Fees 61; date corrected by p. 182 of photocopy of the original membership records at The Holland Society of New York). On 13 April 1680 Swan bought a farm in the Yellow Hook section of New Utrecht from Teunis Jansen Van Pelt.⁴ The original deed (in Dutch) and an English translation are found at page 191 of Flatbush Town Records, vol. 3 ("Town Records Liber AA Deeds, Transports 1676-1682") at The Holland Society of New York. The translation reads as follows:

On this day the 13th of April, 1680, appeared before me, Jan Gerritsz Van Marcken, clerk at N. Utrecht, the worthy Theunis Jansz van Pel, who declared that he has sold, and Swaen Jansz, that he has bought, the seller's certain lot, situate on the Gelen Hoeck (Yellow Hook), wide and long according to the declaration of the survey, bounded on the north side by Lourens Haff and on the south side by the purchaser, together with the fence standing thereon, with all of the equities thereof, for the sum of two thousand guildens, of which the purchaser (seller?) acknowledges that he has received eighteen hundred seventy three guildens, ten stuivers. Wherefore the buyer promises still to pay for satisfaction of the above mentioned sum one hundred and twenty six guildens, ten stuivers on the 25th of December of the coming year, 1681. Thereupon the seller promises proper transport, free and unencumbered, saving the Lord's right. The surrender of the aforesaid land shall take place immediately. All this done without deceit or trick under bond according to law. In witness of the truth subscribed with their own hands, in presence of Hendrick Mathysz and Anco Jansz, as witnesses hereunto invited, as above.

Tonis Janssen Van Peelt

This mark is placed by
Swaen S Jansz

Henderick Matysen Smack
Ancke Jansen

Known to me,
J.G.V. Marcken, clerk

The translator had noticed that "purchaser" was substituted for "seller" in one place, as noted above. Also, it is likely that it was the seller's land that was

⁴ The size of the farm is not given in the deed, probably because it was a standard New Utrecht lot of 24 morgens (KCo. 312, 337), which was about 48 acres, the size of his son's farm in 1706 (KCo. 156-57).

the southern boundary rather than the purchaser's. The translation accurately reflects the original in both instances.

Swan probably had borrowed most or all of the 1,873 guilders [guldens] he paid in cash for the farm from his former master, Govert Loockermans. This is shown by the fact "Groots Swaen Deeneger" [Big Swan the Negro] owed the estate of Govert Loockermans 1,370 guilders in 1692 (New York Co. wills 3-4:362 [recopied liber]; WNYHS 1:204).

On 8 May 1681 Teuntje, daughter of Swan and Christina, was baptized at the Flatbush Dutch Church; this was the last mention of Christina. There is no mention of Swan in the 1683 rate list of New Utrecht (or anywhere in Kings County), yet there is no reason to believe he was living elsewhere that year.

Swan married second in 1685 at the Flatbush Dutch Church, as follows:

Swaen Janse Van Luane, widower of Christina Manuels, and Susanna Petsers, widow of Salvador Dey, born in London, both residing at Yellow Hook, married December 18, 1685 (Flat.Fr.Marrs. 1:26; compared to photocopy of original at The Holland Society of New York).

By her first husband, Susanna "Petsers" had four children: Samuel, Susanna, William and Elizabeth Dee, for whom see JAAHGS 9:108-11, 116; 10:158 [which is corrected by this article].

In September 1687 "Swaen Janssen" took the oath of allegiance to the King as a resident of New Utrecht, stating that he had been in the country for 33 years (DHNY 1:660); this would place his arrival about 1654. He died prior to 1 February 1691/92 when land belonging to the "widow of Swan Jansen" was mentioned as a boundary (New Utrecht Town Records, vol. 1 ["Town Records, History, Deeds 1659-1831"], p. 143, at The Holland Society of New York).

Susanna was listed in the 1698 census of New Utrecht as Susanna, the widow of Swan; she was head of a household of one woman and four children (DHNY 3:135; Robert J. Swan, "The Black Presence in Seventeenth-Century Brooklyn," *De Halve Maen* 63:4:5 n. 54). The more detailed version of this census, as published in *The Journal of Long Island History* 14:54-57, lists her as *Johanna* and the four children as Jam, Bernardis, Willem and Tuentien, for a total of six (*sic*) people in the household. The children were Susanna's children and stepchildren, as follows:

Jam = Sam[uel] Dee
Bernardis = Bernardus Janse
Willem = William Dee
Tuentien = Teuntje Janse

Susanna's two daughters, Susanna Dee and Elizabeth Dee, were already married by 1698 (JAAHGS 9:108-09), and there is no evidence Swan and Christina had any other children.

Susanna's death probably took place prior to December 1706 when her stepson, Bernardus Janse, was listed as the owner of the 48-acre property of "negrow Swan" in New Utrecht (*De Halve Maen* 63:4:6; KCo. 156-57).

Children of Swan Janse Van Luane and Christina Manuels:

- i. Bernardus Janse (probably named for his uncle, Bernardus Manuels, for whom see Icon. 6:105), m. (as Bernardus Janse, bachelor, from Flatlands) New York Dutch Church 20 Dec. 1709 Jannetie Salomons, bap. there 4 Sept. 1685, daughter of Salomon Pieters and Maria Anthony (JAAHGS 9:106-07, 111). He d. before 15 May 1716 (*ibid.*),⁵ leaving a will as Bernardus Jansen of Yellow Hook in New Utrecht, dated 10 Mar. 1715/16, proved 7 July 1719, mentioning wife Jannetje (to be executor), only son John Jansen, sister Teuntje, and wife's brothers and sisters (unnamed). The guardians of his son were to be friends Hendrick Van Dyck and Claes Van Dyck (New York Co. Wills 9:82; original will #586; WNYHS 2: 196). His son probably was identical with Jan Janse, bachelor, born Long Island, living at Hackensack, who m. at the Hackensack Dutch Church 7 May 1737 Seletje Pieterse (JAAHGS 9:111, 112). However, no children of Jan Janse have been found.
- ii. Teuntje Janse, bap. Flatbush Dutch Church 8 May 1681, as child of Swan and Christina, negroes; witness: Anetie Tilemans (Flat.Fr.Baps. 1:24; compared to photocopy of original at The Holland Society of New York), d. after 10 Mar. 1715/16 when she was mentioned in her brother's will. Bergen suggests (KCo. 345) she was identical with Teuntje Van Laan who m. New York Dutch Church 20 Jan. 1705 Anthony Byvanck (MDC 103). However, it is clear from the names and sponsors of the Byvanck children (BDC, *passim*) that Teuntje "Van Laan" was the daughter of Hendrick Thyssen Lanen Van Pelt (KCo. 355; SCHQ 2:115).

⁵ The name of "Bernardus Janse" is on a document dated 1 May 1712 of freeholders and inhabitants of New Utrecht (New Utrecht Town Records, vol. 1, *supra*, pp. 176-77). His name is also on lists of freeholders dated 22 June 1719 who drew lots for the division of common lands (*ibid.*, pp. 179, 180, 182, 183); presumably any common lands or rights went to his widow or to the guardians of his son. No other man of this name was been found in New Utrecht records of the early 18th century.

LUTHERAN CHURCH MARRIAGES IN NEW YORK CITY

TRANSCRIBED AND TRANSLATED BY THE ASSOCIATE EDITOR

(Continued from THE RECORD 125:41)

1800

- Jan. 29 Anthony Castor, a tobacco manufacturer, widow [*sic*] his wife died here four month[s] ago, and Elizabeth Douglas — She has no parents here in town. Wit. James Tiess, John Tiess, John Joseph, Francis Joseph.
- Feb. 2 Thomas Bran, shoemaker and Elizabet Stout — Wit. John Bogart, the bride's step-father and his wife, her mother, John Hendricks.