

A Sketch of Peter Van Camp (1721-1783)

Robert Scott Shaw

Peter Van Camp, born probably in Dutchess Co., N.Y., was son of Marretjen Westvaal and Jacob Van Kampen.¹ He and his twin brother Simon were baptized 2 Apr 1721 across the Hudson River at the Reformed Dutch Church in Kingston.² The first record we have of him as a young man is in 1741 when he was sponsor with his sister Heyltjen for the baptism of his cousin Peter Westvall at Rhinebeck Flats [RhinCR]. After the death of their father about 1742, Peter and his brother John inherited their father's interests in property in the Great Nine Partners patent of Dutchess Co. Their grandfather, John Van Campen, in 1745 willed his portion to them, and with it assumption of the debt to John Everson from whom the property was bought [NJWA v30]. The county road book describes a road which ran in October 1743 from "Dover Plains west up the hill ... through Filkin Town to Peter Van Camp's mill," so at this time Peter was probably operating a grist mill [ReynN].

The subdivision of the county in which the Nine Partners patent lay was at this time the Crum Elbow precinct, named after the main creek of the area. In the Crum Elbow records, we find in 1744 "peter vancampen" chosen an overseer of highways. In 1746 Peter had the ear mark used to identify his animals recorded. In 1747 the brothers sold 137 acres of their property in lot 12 of the Nine Partners, with house and grist mill, to Nicholas Trawer. The deed was signed by John and "peter van campen"; their mother Mary also released her rights in the property.³ ([CrumR])

Probably about 1750, Peter married Phebe Bergen, daughter of Teunis Bergen of the town of Jamaica on Long Island. It is Teunis Bergen's will, dated 1755, which identifies Phebe as wife of "Peter Van Kemp." Like the husbands of two other of Teunis's daughters, the will describes Peter as being "of the nine partners in Dutchess county." [BergWT]⁴ Together Peter and Phebe had at least these children: Mary, Jacob, Phoebe, Teunis, Simon, Jannitie, Heiltie, John, and Sara ([SchaCR], [OntaAR2]).

*Author's address: P.O.Box 2201, Cupertino, CA 95015; email rshaw8k at yahoo dot com.

¹The surname was in the process of changing from "Van Campen" to "Van Camp" during Peter's lifetime. It seems "Van Campen" tended to be used in more formal circumstances, but eventually, perhaps under British influences, "Van Camp" came to predominate. The same change can be seen with many, but not all, others of the name in the middle colonies in the same time period.

²[KingCR]. Following the Dutch tradition, Simon was named for the mother's father, Simon Westfall. In the Bible, Jesus called the apostle Simon his "rock," which is Petrus in Latin, or Peter in English. The choice of the name Peter for Simon's twin is hence particularly apt.

³The deed says the property came to the brothers from their father Jacob via the will dated 18 Feb 1741/2. I have not located this will.

⁴T. G. Bergen in *The Bergen Family* apparently misread the will, calling Phebe and two of her sisters children of Teunis's daughter Jannetje (Bergen) Hegeman.

Over the next decade Peter was having difficulty coping with debts, at least in part due to the encumbrances of his father's estate. For instance, in 1741 Jacob and two partners had given a note for £320; in 1753 Peter and John were sued for this money as executors of Jacob's estate. In 1754 they were sued for a year-old note of their own for £100. In 1756 the county sheriff sold 96 ac of John and Peter's towards satisfying the £320 debt. In 1758 (recorded 1762) the sheriff sold the adjoining 96 acres belonging to Peter to satisfy various debts, with Peter presumably receiving the £75 excess. In the spring and fall of 1760, Peter VanCampen, "in the custody of the sheriff," was sued for debts £6 and £12, the latter for merchandise including a wagon.⁵

The last records of Peter Van Camp in Dutchess County seem to be from 1760. It was probably soon after that time that he moved his family to land in the Halfmoon District, on the Hudson River just above its junction with the Mohawk.⁶ The lot of 95 acres was in New Town in Albany County, an area just north of what is now Middletown, Halfmoon Township, Saratoga County [NYGzS]. In 1766 and 1768 Peter and Phebe had their last two children baptized at the Dutch Reformed church across the river in Schaughticoke.⁷ In this same church, their first eight grandchildren were baptized over the next ten years, with various members of the family witnessing the baptisms.

The outbreak of the Revolution brought major changes. The family appears to have generally supported the British government, eventually becoming solidly loyal to the Crown. Peter's son Jacob, being a Tory, had his farm at Stillwater confiscated and was imprisoned at Hartford for five months in 1777. In 1780 Jacob and his brother-in-law John Boice went to Canada and joined the King's Royal Regiment of New York. Peter was said to have been fined and imprisoned. His farm was raided and the livestock driven off. ([OntaAR2; VanCLC])

Eventually the harassment caused Peter to leave for Canada. From his loyalist claim we learn he lost not only his New Town farm with its orchard of 100 bearing trees, but also a 40 acre parcel he bought in 1781. Peter included in his claim the cost of planting wheat on this parcel, so we might conjecture that he left in the summer of 1781 or '82 (although Jacob's statement is 1780 [OntaAR2]). Peter probably followed the usual Lake Champlain route to Montreal. His claim mentions a horse, 3 wheels, and furniture left in AllenTown, Vermont; he apparently had difficulties there, whether logistical or political we cannot say. ([VanCLC])

In Canada, without a farm, Peter and his family had to rely on the government for support, as did the families of his older sons [LoyLF]. By this time, all his sons (and his grandson Peter) were in British provincial military units. Peter died in 1783 in Montreal, Quebec [OntaAR2]. His claim for losses in the war (£694 New York currency) had to be resubmitted by his eldest son; in 1790 the family finally received payment of £132 [OntaAR2].

⁵[DutcD9] and [DutcAD documents 3160, 2935, 2984, 4372, 4256, & others].

⁶Halfmoon was presumably named for the ship *De Halve Maen*, which in 1609 sailed upriver to about this point in seeking the Northwest Passage to the Indies.

⁷[SchaCR]. The mother is given as "Femmetje Berger." Femmetje is the Dutch form of Phebe. The surname must be an error for "Bergen."

References

- BergWT Will of Teunis Bergen, 8 Oct 1755; N.Y. Co., N.Y., Wills v. 19, p. 400; LDS microfilm.
- CrumR Franklin Delano Roosevelt, ed., Records of Crum Elbow Precinct, Dutchess Co., N.Y., v. 7 of Collections of the Dutchess Co. Historical Soc. (1940); LDS microfilm.
- DutcAD "Ancient Documents," Dutchess Co., N.Y., Clerks Office; LDS microfilm.
- DutcD9 Clifford Buck and William McDermott, comp., Eighteenth Century Documents of the Nine Partners Patent, Dutchess Co., N.Y., v. 10 of Collections of the Dutchess Co. Historical Soc. (1940); LDS microfiche.
- KingCR Roswell R. Hoes, ed., Baptismal and Marriage Registers of the Old Dutch Church of Kingston, Ulster Co., N.Y. 1660-1809 (1891, reprint 1980).
- LoyLF E. Keith Fitzgerald, ed., Loyalist Lists (Ontario Gen. Soc., 1984); LDS microfiche.
- NJArch Documents Relating to the Colonial, Revolutionary, and Post-Revolutionary History of the State of N.J. (also known as "New Jersey Archives"), First Series (1880-1948).
- NJWA New Jersey Will Abstracts, in New Jersey Archives, 1st Series, v. 30-42.
- NYGzS H. G. Spafford, A Gazetteer of the State of N.Y. (1825).
- OntaAR2 Alexander Fraser, ed., Second Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario (1904).
- OntaFam E. M. Chadwick, Ontarian Families (Lambertville, N.J.: Hunterdon House, 1894, reprint 1970).
- ReynN Helen W. Reynolds, Notes on Dutchess Co., N.Y., packet 1; LDS microfilm #931485.
- RhinCR "Records of the Dutch Reformed Church of Rhinebeck Flats, Dutchess Co, N.Y." in NYGBR, v. 84 (1953).
- SaraHA G. B. Anderson, Our County and It's People (1899).
- SchaCR "Schaughticoke, N.Y. Dutch Reformed Church Records" in NYGBR, v. 60-61 (1929-30).
- VanCLC "Account of the Losses Sustained by Peter Van Camp," U.K. Public Records Office, Audit Office, Loyalist Claims A.O.13, bundle 16, sheet 158; LDS microfilm.