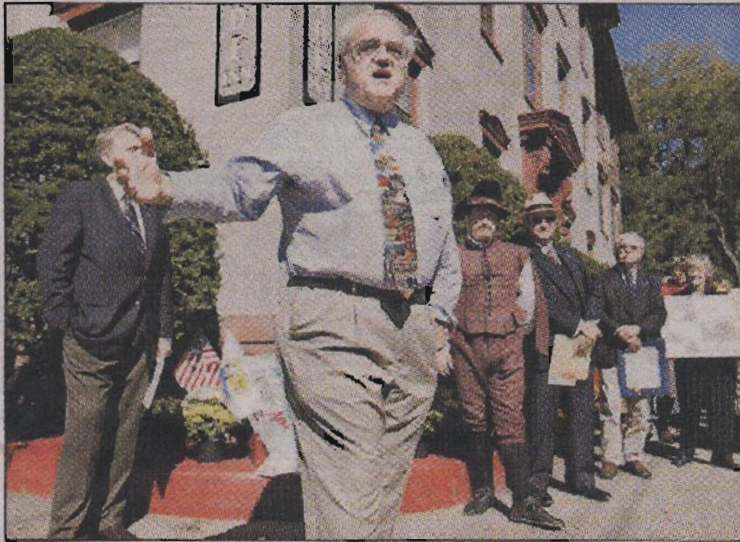


Ceremony celebrates Dutch connection



BARRY SLOAN/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER

Joe Doolittle of the Story Circle at Proctors, center, tells a story during the rededication ceremony for the Arendt Van Curier plaque on Sunday. Looking on from left are Mayor Brian U. Stratton, Steve Weisse as Henry Hudson, Michael Brockbank, and Goos Terschegget.

Plaque rededicated to city's founder

BY MICHAEL GOOT
Gazette Reporter

Two churches and two cities are linked by three people.

Members of the First Reformed Church, city leaders and local historians gathered Sunday at the corner of North Church and Union streets to rededicate a plaque to city founder Arendt Van Curier.

Van Curier was originally from Nijkerk in the Netherlands. However, for a long time, history did not mention his birthplace.

William Elliot Griffis, who served as pastor of the First Reformed Church from 1877 to 1886, rectified that. Griffis was curious about his Dutch roots in America and was responsible for dedicating the plaque in 1909 to mark the lot where Van Curier once lived.

SCHENECTADY

The plaque lists Van Curier's birth year as 1620 and says he "was an adventurous, enterprising leader among the pioneers of the Western World, who with wisdom, justice and humanity administered the affairs of an important colony, and as [ambassador] to the Indians cemented relations of friendship, and shaped the wilderness of New Netherlands for uses of advancing civilization."

A similar plaque noting Van Curier's connection to Schenectady was also dedicated at a cathedral in Nijkerk, where it caught the interest of local alderman Goos Terschegget.

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in to make their downtown popular destination in the shopping nights. B4

A CHRISTIE MYSTERY

There's plenty of humor, if not mysteries, in Agatha Christie's "The Hollow," being presented by the Albany Civic Theater. B5

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Plaque

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"What is this place Schenectady? It was a curiosity he could get rid of," said Joe Doolittle, a storyteller from the Story Circle at Proctors, who relayed the tale at the brief ceremony Sunday. "He taught himself to sail a boat so he could sail across the Atlantic."

Terschegget made the journey in 1984 on the 375th anniversary of the Henry Hudson voyage. He competed in a international sailing competition and came to New York City and then sailed up the Hudson River to Schenectady. A couple dozen of his countrymen flew to the United States to join him for a visit.

In 1986, a contingent led by then-Mayor Karen Johnson traveled to the Netherlands and thus was the beginning of a partnership that continues to this day.

"I want you to pause and reflect on the power of memory to build love and fellowship among people," Doolittle told the crowd of about 100.

Michael Brockbank of the Schenectady/Nijkerk Council said exchanges between the two countries alternate in various years between adults and youths.

Ed Vedder, a member of the current group of about 30 from the Netherlands, said he is enjoying his time in Schenectady. "It's very good that there is an exchange because it keeps the memory living."

Terschegget's daughter Edith Terschegget, who serves as president of the Nijkerk-Schenectady exchange group, said Schenecta-

dy was just one line in the history books when she was younger.

"It's so strange that the Dutch children in school never learned about this. We are so close to each other."

Mayor Brian U. Stratton read a proclamation declaring Sept. 20, 2009 "Schenectady-Nijkerk Exchange Day" as Henry Hudson re-enactor Steve Weisse watched.

"It is my pleasure to join with you today to pay tribute to the 400th anniversary of your fantastic voyage and I must say you're looking splendid for 400 years," he said.

Gioia Ottaviano of Schenectady said she went on one of the exchanges to the Netherlands. "The hospitality was excellent and I'm sure our hospitality for them has been the same," she said.