

BEYOND TOLERANCE-RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Fascinating Early American Families- Bowne, Bradt and Waldrons

BY

GLORIA WALDRON HUKLE

In 1632 historical records indicate that the Norwegian, Albert Andriessen Bradt was living on Romboutsteegh, a street in Amsterdam, Holland, and his occupation is listed as sailor. Albert, also later known in the New Netherland Colony as “Albert the Noorman” arrived in America on the ship *Rensselaerswyck*, April 7, 1637 along with his wife, Annatie, two small children and an infant boy who was born on rough seas during the voyage. The baby was called “Storm.” Albert’s brother, Arent, also arrived with them.

Albert and his young family lived a short distance south of present day Albany, New York. He managed a tobacco plantation and was involved with the saw-mill, but eventually gave up on the tobacco plantation. Farming and the saw-mill became his primary occupations. A dozen years later, the Bradts would be a well established family in the new world.

In the early 1650s Resolved Waldron and his family emigrated from Holland to New Amsterdam. Waldron, who along with his brother, Joseph, had been a printer in Holland, soon became the trusted right-arm sheriff for the Director General of the New Netherlands, Peter Stuyvesant. In 1662 Resolved Waldron was sent on a mission to arrest John Bowne, an Englishman and respected colonial merchant living at Flushing, Queens, whose wife Hannah, a Quaker, had been preaching her faith. Back then practicing one’s religion privately was fine, but holding public religious meetings along with others at home or anywhere outside the approved Dutch Reform church was forbidden. Bowne’s ordeal is accurately recorded within his journal. The first sentence of Bowne’s personal account reads “Resolved Waldron, the scout came to my house at Vlishing (Flushing) with a company of men with swords and guns.....” Outlined is the arrest, his refusal to pay what Mr. Bowne considered an unjust fine, his deportation to Holland, the Dutch trial and his ultimate triumphant return to the New Netherlands after his year long struggle.

The Bowne House, site of this famous arrest, which led to what is considered the first case of religious freedom in America, still stands today open to the public in Flushing, Queens. Further information: www.bownehouse.org

John Bowne’s courage is undeniable, but there were others who also fought to open the doors of freedom on the religious front. One such person was Albert Bradt mentioned above. Like Bowne, he also openly questioned the authority’s idea of religious tolerance when he organized a group of Lutherans in the Beverwyck (Albany, N.Y.) area to hold a service in a home directly across the street from the Dutch Reform church! In 1656 Albert was convicted of organizing religious services. A steep fine was set. He claimed in court that the court of Beaverwyck had no jurisdiction over him because he was a tenant of the patroon. The court found against him, but adjusted his fine somewhat. Ultimately he admitted to his part in the organization and paid the fine imposed but not without rumblings on all sides.

I can’t say whether any Waldrons and Bradts married during those early New Netherlands days, although I suspect that the lawman, Resolved Waldron, and rebellious Albert Bradt did meet. Until the English took over in 1664, the Waldrons lived on the corner of Broadway and present day Wall Street. Albert, although he resided in the present day Albany area, owned a warehouse on the tip of Manhattan Island which also doubled as his office.

However, in 1804 William Waldron, a direct descendent of Resolved Waldron married Judike Bradt, a great great grandchild of Albert. Will and his bride soon relocated to North Creek, New York, and ultimately produced fourteen children, this union giving thousands of Americans a legacy not to be taken lightly. I am one of those thousands.

More Author Information: www.gloriawaldronhukle.name

Bradt information taken from Joan Bradt Wood’s book *Journey to a New Land: The Bradt Family In History*