**PETER MINUIT biography**

Peter Minuit was a Belgian. His Protestant parents had moved from southern Netherlands to Wesel in Germany, in order to escape from the Catholic Spanish colonials, who were not happy with people who had left the Catholic Church to become Protestants. Minuit's birth year is not exactly known.

Peter Minuit married Gertrude Raedts in 1613. Gertrude came from a wealthy family which probably helped Peter in establishing himself as a broker. What products he dealt in is also not known, but it probably involved diamonds, because in a legal document, a will, drawn up in 1615, he is described as a diamond cutter.

Peter Minuit joined the Dutch West India Company [DWIC], in the mid 1620's, and was sent to New Netherland in 1625 to search for tradable goods other than the animal pelts which were then the major tradable product coming from New Netherland. He returned in the same year, and in 1626 was appointed by the DWIC to become the new governor general of New Netherland. Minuit arrived in New Amsterdam on May 4, 1626.

Although Peter Minuit was governor general of the colony for five years, he is best known for his purchase of Manhattan from the Indians for 60 guilders which is estimated to be equivalent to about $25 in 1626 dollars, probably equivalent to about $500 in today's dollars, but still an obvious bargain. The exchange was made in May 1626, the same month he arrived to take up his new governor general position.

Peter Minuit's tenure as governor general was rather uneventful in comparison with earlier or later governor generals of the Dutch colony. He did, however, introduce a measure of democracy in the colony. Upon his arrival in 1626, he proposed a plan to establish an advisory body to the governor general. The advisory body would advise the governor general, and would help develop laws to help govern the colony. In addition he proposed the institution attorney general to enforce the laws on the books.

In 1631 Minuit was relieved of his duties as governor general. What the reasons were for his termination is not clear, but the directors of the DWIC were business people and Minuit may have made decisions that were, in their view, not in the interest of the DWIC organization.

After his governor generalship of New Netherland, he worked with the Swedish Government to establish a Finnish-Swedish settlement, called New Sweden, near what is now Wilmington, Delaware. It was in the territory then claimed by the Dutch. Was it done out of spite for his former employers? Perhaps.

On his return from New Sweden in 1638, his ship and he made a side trip to the Caribbean to pick up a load of tobacco. Unfortunately, at that time there existed no hurricane tracking methods. While having dinner aboard a Dutch ship a hurricane forced all ships out to sea. Minuit was ever seen again; however, his ship the *Kalmar Nyckel* did make it back to Sweden without him.

**PETER MINUIT biography**

1. Why did he flee the Netherlands to go to Germany?   
2. Prior to joining the Dutch West India Company, what did he do for a living?   
3. Though the reasons he was fired s governor of New Netherland were not made clear, what is the suspected cause of his termination?   
4. Where did he work after being fired by the Dutch?   
5. What could have been his motivations for doing that?   
6. What colony did he establish here (in Delaware)?   
7. What  eventually happened to him?