

Chapter Four

The Pirates

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Anthony Jansen Van Salee

“Jan Janszoon (Jansz or Jansen) was one of the most successful corsairs (pirates) of the Mediterranean Sea. As a young seaman, Jan Janszoon of the Netherlands ventured forth into the world and eventually won the favor of the Sultan of Morocco. The Sultan designated Jan as Morat Rais or Admiral of the Sultan's fleet at Salee (or Salé), Morocco. In addition, Jan received other honors such as the Governor of the Castle of El Qualidia. The plain truth is that Jan was a pirate leader who sailed the seas in the latter part of the 16th and early 17th centuries and was rewarded for his exploits by his employer.

“Jan, originally from the seaport city of Haarlem in the Netherlands, began his career as a Dutch privateer harassing Spanish shipping. He sailed with a letter of Marque to capture pirates that operated from Dunkirk in Belgium. He found there wasn't enough profit in this, so he sailed south to the Barbary Coast where he became a pirate and attacked ships of all countries. When he attacked a Spanish ship he flew the Dutch flag, when he attacked all others he flew the red half moon of the Turks. He sailed with a small boat from La Rochelle in France, but he was captured in 1618 at Lanzarote (or Lancerote), one of the Canary Isles, by Barbary Pirates and he was taken to Algiers.

“After this, he became a member of the crew of De Veenboer, another notorious and very successful pirate who had become Admiral of the Fleet of Algiers in 1617. Sailing under De Veenboer, he managed to work himself up to steerer. When De Veenboer decided to stay ashore, Janszoon took over as a commander of his ship (1618 or 1619).

“Jan had abandoned his wife and at least two children back in Haarlem, but he apparently had one of his sons, Anthony, with him in 1618 when he was captured. Jan embraced his new life, achieving success with the Admirals of the Turkish fleet. Jan is quoted as saying, roughly, "It's better to sail with the Moor than to sail for the Papists." Anthony grew to manhood in Morocco, training as a pirate.

“While in Algiers, Jan converted to Islam and took a Moorish woman as a second wife, which is acceptable according to the Islamic faith. He also adopted the name of Murat Reis (Murat, Morat, Murate or Morato). In 1619, Jan took Salee, a port city in Morocco, as his base of operations. Salee was the infamous home of the "Salee Rovers," notorious buccaneers that preyed on shipping in the Mediterranean, the Atlantic coasts, and the Indian Ocean.

“Janszoon became a rich man between his Admiral perks, payments for anchorage, pilotage, other harbor dues and from the brokerage on stolen goods. He would become bored from time to time and sail off on an adventure.

“Salee became very prosperous and consequently the pirates declared Salee an independent republic governed by fourteen pirates and a president who was also the Admiral of the Navy. Jan was elected the first President and Admiral. After an unsuccessful siege by Morocco, the Sultan eventually acknowledged its independence. The main sources of income of Salee were piracy, shipping and dealing in stolen property. Janszoon went privateering in the North Sea and the North Atlantic.

“In 1622, he and his crew sailed into the English Channel to try his luck there. When they ran low on supplies, in No-

vember 1623, they docked at the port of Veere, Holland under the Moroccan flag claiming diplomatic privileges. The authorities could not deny the two ships access to Veere because at that time several peace treaties and trade agreements existed between the emperor of Morocco and the Dutch Republic. While there, the Dutch authorities trotted out his Dutch wife and children to persuade him to give up pirating. The same happened to many more on board. Rather than succeeding in luring any of the crew to leave their footloose ways, several young Dutchmen signed up for a lifetime of adventure and sailed off with Janszoon when he left in December despite their being prohibited to do so by the Dutch authorities.

“After Jan returned to Salee in 1624, Sultan Moulay Zaydan, who wanted a show of sovereignty over the area, appointed Jan Governor of Salee.

“In February 1626, Jan Janszoon was again in Holland, though under different circumstances. He had left Salee with 3 ships and had apparently captured a rich Spanish prize that he hoped to sell in the Dutch Republic. When his ships arrived in the North Sea they spotted what appeared to be a rich Dutch merchant ship with only a few men on guard. They went along side, but Jans men were boarding the ship, the Dutch flag was struck and the Spanish flag went up instead. They were immediately attacked by the crew that had hidden itself. The ship turned out to be a Spanish privateer from Duinkerken. One of Jan's ships was almost immediately disabled and forced to surrender. The other two ships barely managed to get away - heavily damaged and with many dead and casualties. One of the ships managed to sail into the Maas River in Holland. The most heavily damaged one was able to reach Amsterdam, via the Isle of Texel, where the crew had a hard time getting medical aid. The ship in Amsterdam was sold and the pirates left with the remaining ship that had entered the Maas.

“After this voyage, Janszoon was mainly active in Salee as a dealer in stolen goods. His reputation seems to have suffered from this less adventurous profession. Early in 1627, Janszoon hired a Danish slave to pilot them to Iceland where they raided Reykjavik, further north than he had ever previously sailed. In the harbor of the capital, he attacked a ship, but they only managed to steal some salted fish and a few hides, so they captured 400 Icelanders to be sold as slaves. On the way, back he also took a Dutch vessel and imprisoned more people. The people were sold as slaves in Salee.

“The political climate changed in Salee toward the end of 1627, so Janszoon moved his family and operations back to Algiers and seems to have lived in Algiers and Tripoli for some time. In 1631, Jan again sailed north, this time to England and Ireland where they captured and imprisoned about two hundred men who were sold as slaves in Algiers. The poem, "The Sack of Baltimore" was written about this raid in Ireland. In Baltimore alone, he captured 108 men.

“From 1631 to 1640, not much is known about his actions. He may have been captured and held prisoner by the "Knights of Malta" for a short period, but whether this is true remains unclear. He apparently escaped because in 1640, he was appointed by the Emperor of Morocco as the Governor of the Castle Maladia on the West Coast of Morocco. Also in that year, his Dutch daughter, Lysbeth Janszoon (Lysbeth Jansen Van Haarlem) sailed to Morocco to visit him. The last thing that is known is that he and his daughter stayed at the Castle of Maladia until August 1641 when she returned to Holland. Nothing is known about him after 1641.

“The European records say that Jan, the Murat Reis, came to a bad end, but no details are known about how he came to meet his Maker.

“Anthony, Jan’s son, grew up in Morocco, but when he reached adulthood he returned to the Netherlands. He met Grietje Reyniers (or Reijners) in Amsterdam in the Nether-

lands, obtained a marriage license on December 15, 1629, and they were married on board the ship heading for New Amsterdam (now New York City) in 1630. Grietje, daughter of Johannes Reijners (born 1576 in the Netherlands) and Jannetje (born in 1580 in the Netherlands) was a widow when she met Anthony.

“The marriage certificate describes Grietje as "from Wessel, Germany", although her parents were both from the Netherlands. Various authors insinuate that she used her wiles on him, being older than he, but he never seemed to mind. She apparently worked in a tavern in the Netherlands as a young woman, but she was fired for acting inappropriately. Given the reputations of taverns in the Renaissance, one wonders what she did that was so inappropriate as to get her fired. She was also an argumentative woman, so perhaps she was the perfect match for Anthony, who enjoyed a good lawsuit against his neighbors every now and again.

“Anthony is described as being from Cartagena (in Spain), probably to avoid any problems from being recognized as a pirate and the son of a pirate. It is surmised by one author that Anthony and Grietje got married on board ship to bypass the religious authorities in either the Netherlands or New Amsterdam, because Anthony paid at least lip service to Islam and Grietje had little respect for the trappings of religion. He was referred to in the New World as "The Turk," and he had in his possession a lovely Koran written in Arabic. In later years though, he was a moving force in legislation enforcing observance of Christian services in New Amsterdam.

“When Anthony arrived in New Amsterdam (today, New York City), he proceeded to buy a great deal of land in what is now lower Manhattan and set himself up as a very prosperous farmer and land owner. It is possible that his father had provided him with a good nest egg to start him off in the New World. It is also suspected that contact was maintained between father and son, as Anthony's homestead

on Long Island included an excellent deep-water anchorage, where mysterious ships and privateers would anchor. There apparently is a great deal of information that can be found on his land holdings, his marriage, and his relations with his neighbors, more information than can be related in these notes.

“Anthony was a contentious neighbor, and whether due to an ego brought on by this background, or a natural aversion to friendship, he was widely known as a very disagreeable fellow. He was constantly at odds with neighbors and he did not hesitate to tangle with the Dutch authorities, or the Church. (Several articles concerning the history of Long Island have included colorful descriptions of Anthony's background.) Still, he is also reported to have been well respected in the community. He is an acknowledged founder of several communities in Long Island, and his opinion was respected in the communities.

“As a result of the antisocial behavior of his wife, Anthony was induced to leave the city of New Amsterdam. Anthony took his time about leaving and even after moving to Long Island, continued to deal in real estate for the rest of his life. After selling the farm on what is now lower Manhattan, Anthony bought 200 acres about ten miles away near the community of Gravesend, thus becoming the first settler of Brooklyn.

“His land fronted on Gravesend Bay across from the present Coney Island and not far from the place where Henry Hudson was said to have come ashore less than 50 years earlier. Since Coney Island abutted his property, it was, until sometime in the last century, also referred to as "Turk's Island"; the word, "Turk", being a designation of his which the records used interchangeably with, "mulatto".

“According to some documentation, it would seem that Anthony van Salee never converted to Christianity. His Koran, in fact, was in a descendant's possession until about fifty

years ago when, ignorant of its relevance to his family's history, he offered it for sale at auction.

“Anthony and Grietje had four children, Annica, Cornelia, Eva, and Sarah. Grietje died in 1669, and Anthony apparently remarried in 1670 to Metje Gravenaet. He died six years later.

“Anthony and Grietje's eldest daughter, Annica (later Anglicized to Eunice), born around 1632, married Thomas Southard in 1650. Thomas and Annica had eight children and thus began the Southard family in the New World. “

I will continue my story from the point where I diverged after the last chapter to tell you about this interesting family. In the last chapter, we ended up with my grandparents, Fred and Bessie Ameigh, being second cousins through the Southard line. The next chapter, then, is the Southard line.