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*Flagon & Trencher: Taverner and Innkeeper
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JOHANNES NEVIUS

Ferry Tavern, Brooklyn, New York

Johannes Nevius was baptized at Zoelen, on the river Linge, in the Neder-Betuwe, in the Province of Gelderland, Holland on 14 March 1627, and died at Brooklyn before 10 June 1672. He married at New Amsterdam 28 November 1653 Adriaentie Bleyck, daughter of Swaantie Jans and step-daughter of Cornelis de Potter. She was from Batavia on the Island of Java, East Indies. They had eight children.

Johannes Nevius was the son of Johannes and Maria (Beex) Nevius. His father moved to Zoelen following graduation from the University of Leyden and was married there in 1625; he was a minister of the Gospel. Johannes Junior came to New Amsterdam in 1651 as an importer and trader, quickly becoming successful, and marrying the step-daughter of a wealthy merchant. On 8 December 1654 he was appointed Schepen and in 1657 City Secretary, due to his education and excellent penmanship. When the English took possession of the government in 1664, having little knowledge of their language, he decided to return to importing. Having sold his houses at Broadway, south of Wall St., and on Pearl between Broad and Whitehall, he now moved to Brooklyn where he acquired the Tavern and became lessee of the ferry that had been his step-father's.

The ferry went from present day Fulton St., Brooklyn to what is now South Street Seaport, Manhattan. The construction of the tavern building is fully described:

"Three transome windows and one door on the front, the front to be planed and grooved and the rear to have boards overlapped in order to be tight, with door and windows therein, and a floor and garret grooved beneath" (on the under side) to saw the roof thereon and moreover to set a window frame with a glass light in the front side: to make a chimney mantel and to wainscot the fore-room below, and divide it in the center across with door in the partition; to set a window frame with two glass lights therein; further, to wainscot the east side the whole length of the house and in the recess tow bedsteads, one in the front room and one in the inside room, with a pantry at the end of the bedstead; a winding staircase in the fore-room."

Several later additions made the building a more complete facility. Probably Nevius employed ferrymen while he and his wife ran the inn. An early traveler gave the following description:

"It was the business of the good vrouw or her maid to show up the traveler and open the doors in the smooth partition of the box which was to receive his weary limbs for the night, and which otherwise he might not be able to discover, and after he crept into it, to come back again and blow out the candle and in the morning to draw the curtains of the windows at the hour fixed to rise. There was one room in which all the guests were received and where there was a pleasant reunion in the evening and all the visitors ate, drank and smoked. It has in one corner, a closet which when opened, disclosed sundry decanters, glasses and black bottles; and on one side of the room a rack in which were suspended by their bowls a score or two of very long pipes each one inscribed with the name of a neighbor, its owner. This was the room of Mynheer, the landlord, who found all his occupation here in attending to the pleasure of his guests. He had no care beyond this; Mynvrow was the head of the house; she attended to all the wants of the guests and gave them the information which they might desire. She was always on the spot as when with a 'wel te rusten' like a good mother, she bade you good night and when with a 'hoo-y-reis' like an old friend, she bade you goodbye."

Johannes Nevius remained at this occupation until his death in 1672 whereupon his widow, on the tenth of June 1672, signed the petition to hold the Ferry House as "widow." She ran the tavern and ferry until 1674 when she married Jan Aersen and together they ran the establishment for fifteen to twenty years.

Michael H. Charles
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