

REPORT OF GOVERNOR JOHAN PRINTZ,

1647

Report to the Right Honorable West India Company in Old Sweden, sent from New Sweden, February 20, 1647.

1. From June 20, in the year 1644, when the vessel *Fama* went from hence, to October 1, 1646, when the vessel *Haij*¹ arrived, two years and four months elapsed; and the whole of this time we received no letters, either from the Kingdom or from Holland. This last vessel was four months on the way, losing her sails, topmasts, and other implements, and fared very badly. The master of the ship, the mate, and all the people, except one man, were sick; so that, according to their report, they would have despaired, if they had not reached land when they did. Not until the month of December was the vessel in repair, and the people recovered; and, the winter commencing at the same time, they were obliged to stay here until the ice broke up. Now, however, on the subscribed date, the ship is dispatched with 24,177 pounds² of tobacco, in 101 casks, of which 6,920 pounds were planted in New Sweden, and 17,257 pounds were purchased. May God Almighty grant her a happy passage home!

2. The cargo has been safely delivered, according to the invoice accompanying it from Peter Trotzig, excepting eight kettles, one plank, three axes, and fourteen ells of frieze wanting in the measure; fourteen pairs of stockings and 180 ells of frieze were ruined on shipboard; likewise, part of the Norrenberg goods were much rusted, which (except what the commissary has received to sell amongst the savages) are to be sent at the very first opportunity to North England³ for sale.

3. Concerning the improvements of the country: (1) Fort Elfsborgh has been tolerably well fortified. (2) Fort Christina, which was very much decayed, has been repaired from

¹ *Shark.*

² Swedish pounds.

³ New England.

top to bottom. (3) The Fort in Skylenküll, called Kårsholm is pretty nearly ready. We are filling and working at it every day. So that, if we had people, ammunition, and other necessary resources, we should certainly not only be in a position to maintain ourselves in the said places, but also be enabled to settle and fortify other fine sites. Again, 28 freemen are settled, and part of them provided with oxen and cows, so that they already begin to prosper; but women are wanting. Many more people are willing to settle, but we cannot spare them on account of the places wanting them. The country is very well suited for all sorts of cultivation; also for whale fishery and wine, if some one was here who understood the business. Mines of silver and gold may possibly be discovered, but nobody here has any knowledge about such things. The Hollanders boast that three years ago they found a gold mine between Manathans and here, not in any place purchased by us, but nearer to New Sweden than to New Netherland. Hitherto, however, they have not got any gold out of it. There is no appearance here of salt, or of silkworms, because the winter is sometimes so sharp, that I never felt it more severe in the northern parts of Sweden.

4. The people have all the time been in good health; only two men and two small children have died. The reason that so many people died in the year 1643 was that they had then to begin to work, and but little to eat. But afterward we gave them, besides their regular rations, board to apply on their wages, and they have done well from it. Still, all of them wish to be released, except the freemen. And it cannot be otherwise. If the people willingly emigrating should be compelled to stay against their will, no others would desire to come here. The whole number of men, women, boys, girls, and children now living here is 183 souls, according to the annexed roll.

5. In the year 1645, November 25, between ten and eleven o'clock, the gunner Swen Wass, set Fort New Gothenburg on fire; in a short time all was lamentably burnt down, and not the least thing saved, except the barn. The people escaped naked and destitute. The winter immediately set in, bitterly cold; the river and the creeks froze up; and nobody was able to get near us (because New Gothenburg is surrounded by

water). The sharpness of the winter lasted far into the month of March; so that, if some rye and corn had not been unthreshed, I myself and all the people with me on the island would have starved to death. But God maintained us with that small quantity of provision until we got the grain from the field and were again relieved. By this sad accident the loss of the Company, testified by the annexed roll, is 4000 rix-dollars. The above-mentioned Swen Wass who caused the fire, I have brought to court, and caused him to be tried and sentenced; so I have sent him home in irons, with the vessel, accompanied by the whole record concerning him, submissively committing and referring the execution of the verdict to the pleasure of Her Royal Majesty and the Right Honorable Company.

6. Again, I have caused a church to be built in New Gothenburg, decorating it according to our Swedish fashion, so far as our resources and means would allow. Also in the same place I have rebuilt a storehouse, for the provisions and as many cargoes as may be sold there on the Company's behalf. Further, to prejudice the trade of the Hollanders, I have built a fine house (called Wasa)¹ on the other side of Kårsholm, by the road of the Minquas,² so strong that four or five men, well provided with guns, balls, and powder, will be able to defend themselves there against the savages; seven freemen, sturdy fellows, have settled in that place. Again, a quarter of a mile³ higher up, by the said Minquas' road, I have built another strong house, five freemen settling there. This place I have called Möndal,⁴ building there a watermill, which runs the whole year, to the great advantage of the country, particularly as the windmill, formerly here, before I came, would never work, and was good for nothing. Now, when the great traders, the Minquas, travel to the Dutch trading-place or house, Nas-

¹ So named for the royal family of Sweden.

² The Great Trading Path of the Minquas Indians led from the Susquehanna River, doubtless from the White Minquas or Susquehanna Fort on the west side of the river at the mouth of Conewago Creek, York County, just below the stoppage of navigation at the Great Falls, across Lancaster, Chester, and Delaware counties to Kingessing Creek or the Upper Minquas Kill at Schuylkill River.

³ About one and two-thirds English miles.

⁴ On the present Cobbs Creek near the Blue Bell Inn on the road from Darby to Philadelphia.

sau,¹ they are obliged to pass by those two places, which (please God) hereafter shall be provided with cargoes.

7. Concerning trade, in the year 1644, when the ship *Fama* went from here, there was very little of the cargo left in store; and, as we have been without merchandise ever since, not only has the Right Honorable Company suffered the great damage of losing 8000 or 9000 beavers, which have passed out of our hands, but also the Hollanders have drawn the principal traders (the White and Black Minquas) from us; and we shall be able only with great difficulty to regain them. But as soon as this vessel² arrived I dispatched Commissary Hindrik Hughen, with the watchmaster Gregorius van Dyk and eight soldiers, to the country of the Minquas, fifty German miles³ from hence, offering them all sorts of presents, by which means they were induced to negotiate, and we received assurance from them that they would trade with us as before, especially as the commissary promised them to give more than the Hollanders. Whether they keep their word will be seen in the future.

8. It is of the utmost necessity for us to see how we can get rid of the Dutch from the river, for they oppose us on every side: (1) They destroy our trade everywhere. (2) They strengthen the savages with guns, shot, and powder, publicly trading with these against the edict of all Christians. (3) They stir up the savages to attack us, which, but for our prudence, would already have happened. (4) They begin to buy land from the savages within our boundaries, which we had purchased already eight years ago, and have the impudence here and there to erect the seal of the West India Company, calling it their arms; moreover, they give New Sweden the name of New Netherland, and are not ashamed to build their houses there, as can be learned more at length from the Dutch Governor's letter, here annexed, and from my answer to it; in

¹ The Dutch Fort Nassau (1623-1651), near the mouth of Big Timber Creek, in the present Gloucester County, New Jersey.

² The *Haij*.

³ About two hundred and thirty English miles. It is given as five German miles (or about twenty-three English miles) in one transcript, but that seems an error. In 1648 the Swedes carried goods from Fort Christina thirty German miles (about one hundred and thirty-eight English miles) into the country of the Minquas.

short, they appropriate to themselves alone every right, hoist high their own flags, and would surely not pay the least attention to Her Majesty's flags and forts, were they not reminded by a couple of cannon. So that if they are not kept out of the river, either by mutual agreement or other means, they will disturb our whole work. The better to accomplish this intention of theirs, some of the Hollanders have entirely quitted the Christians, resorting to the Minquas, behaving with much more unseemliness than the savages themselves. I have several times written to their Governor about all these improprieties, and also caused their arms to be cut down, but it did not make any difference: they see very well that we are weak; and, with no earnestness on our side, their malice against us increases more and more. And all the people, who are doing this mischief, are merely Dutch freemen, provided with their Governor's passport, and trading on their own account, paying duties therefor, the Company itself not trading at all, and deriving very little advantage from this. As to the English Puritans, with whom I had most to do at first, I have at last been able, with the authority of Her Majesty, to drive them from hence; and they have not been heard from for a long time, except that one Captain Clerk¹ was sent here last year, from North England, to try to settle a few hundred families under Her Majesty's flag, which I, in a civil way, refused, referring the matter to Her Majesty's further resolution.

9. The commissary's report will show our provisions and state here in New Sweden. It is a pity that for a long time we have had very little traffic and profit, while the expenses and the wages are the same. Still, could we get rid of the Hollanders, and be left alone in our trade, by successive cargoes the loss would be easily repaired in a short time. What profit we have derived from foreign cargoes, besides our own, can be seen in the commissary's account; I think it may be about 10,000 rix-dollars.

10. The cattle roll will give information about the offspring; the two head of cattle which were here before me, and the three I brought with me. It shows they have increased to ten in all, that the purchased cattle are fourteen oxen and one cow, and that one part is divided amongst the freemen, and

¹ Not identified.

the other part is in the use of the Company. And, whereas the freemen need cattle as the principal instrument for the cultivation of the land, I intend next May to buy some in Virginia, particularly as the Governor there has written to me, also offering his assistance in other ways.

11. I have caused the barge to be fully constructed, so that the hull is ready and floating on the water; but the completion of the work must be postponed until the arrival of a more skilled carpenter, the young men here declaring they do not know enough to finish it. Again, we want a good engineer, house-carpenter, mason, brickmaker, potter, cooper, skilful gun- and locksmiths, and blacksmiths, a chamois-dresser, tanner, tailor, shoemaker, ropemaker, wheelwright, and executioner; all these are of great necessity here, and, above all, a good number of unmarried women for our unmarried freemen and others, besides a good many families for cultivating the land, able officers and soldiers, as well as cannon and ammunition, for the defence of the forts and the country. And, when the Hollanders and other nations are aware that Her Royal Majesty has such a royal earnestness in this behalf, I think they will be careful, because when I came here, four years ago, they immediately abandoned the bad intentions they had formerly exercised against our people, but afterward, since so little has been done for the affair, they have once more grown overbearing.

12. The savages in Virginia, New Netherland, and North England have made peace with the Christians, and our own savages have been quiet ever since. Thus, if the Hollanders were not here, we should soon be on good terms with them; but the savages now have war amongst themselves, more to the prejudice than to the advantage of the beaver-trade.

13. As before stated the officers, as well as the common soldiers, not settled in the country and not yet willing to settle, want to be released; particularly Commissary Hindrik Hugen, whom I myself now, for the third time, have with great difficulty persuaded to stay until the arrival of the next ship; he ought to be replaced by a very able commissary. Again, the minister Magister Johan Campanius wishes to be dismissed, and we need at least two clergymen in the places already settled. Again, the freemen desire to know something about

their privileges, for themselves and their descendants; likewise the criminals, how long they must serve for their crimes; as to all which I humbly asked to be informed more circumstantially in my former Reports of 1643 and 1644.

14. Whereas a letter from Postmaster-General Johan Beijer, dated Stockholm, March 17, 1645, apprises me that the vessels *Calmar Nyckel* and *Fama* had arrived in Holland, and that my Report was lost on the way (if this really be the fact), I only recapitulate herein what goods were sent home in return by the *Fama*, annexing a copy of Captain Peter Pålsson's receipt for the said goods. These were: 1300 whole beavers, 299 half-beavers, 537 third-parts of beavers—great and small together, 2136 beavers; again, tobacco, 20,467 lbs. in 77 hogsheads; again, my own tobacco, which partly I received in payment from foreigners, and partly I planted myself, 7200 lbs. in 28 hogsheads, sent home to the shareholders in Sweden, that they may either reimburse me at eight stivers a pound, or graciously allow me to sell it elsewhere.

15. In the sixth paragraph of my above-mentioned Report, sent from here in 1644, I mentioned the necessity of erecting a trading-house for various kinds of merchandise, namely, for clothing, shoes, different sorts of stuffs, linen cloth, thread, silk, fine and coarse cloth, divers colors for dyeing, buttons, Leyden ribbons, hats, belts, swords, tanned leather, etc. Those goods are very vendible here, and in Virginia and New England, and can be sold at a profit of 100 per cent. The house is also needed for all sorts of provisions, both for our own people, and for foreigners. A judicious and faithful man, however, must be put over it and all provisions, who may give each of our people what he wants, on account of wages. Thus the people can be paid every month entirely out of the profit, without the Right Honorable Company's diminishing its principal, but perhaps making money, everything here being extremely dear: for example, one barrel of malt (Swedish measure) costs seven to eight rix-dollars, one pound of hops half a rix-dollar, one pound of pork ten stivers, one barrel of corn six rix-dollars, which last could be sown in this country, brewed, baked, and afterwards sold to the people with advantage; I have paid 54 rix-dollars to the English for one barrel of beef: in short, everything is dear.

16. In the ninth paragraph of my above-mentioned Report I also spoke about the *zewandt* trade in North England, and said that a trusty man ought to be sent to purchase *zewandt* for us there, because it can be had cheap in that country, while here we are obliged to pay to the English and Hollanders a double price in good beavers, and yet we cannot always get it. It is not possible to keep up the Indian trade by means of cargoes only, because the savages always want *zewandt* besides, this being their money.

Again, I have several times before solicited a learned and able man: first, to attend to the judicial business, sometimes very intricate cases occurring, in which it is difficult, and never ought to be, that one and the same person appear in the court as plaintiff as well as judge; and, secondly, to act as secretary, especially in the Latin language, for many times it has happened (as is proved by the annexed paper) that I have received Latin letters from all parts; these it would be well to answer in Latin, as really I have done as best I could, but I submissively entreat if it is possible, for the future, to be released from such work through the assistance, as above stated, of a competent person.

17. I have caused some waterfalls to be examined suitable as a site for saw-mills, below the dam by the newly built grist-mill, as well as in three other places, where there is plenty of oak. But we want a man who can superintend the saw-mill; also, windlasses and blades for saws. If such saw-mills were erected (which might easily be done), every year we might cut and make ready a goodly quantity of planks, besides making compass and pipe timber, which could be very advantageously bartered in the Flemish Islands for wine, which might be either carried to the Kingdom, or sold in Virginia for tobacco. But for this purpose a proper vessel ought to be kept here by the year, which at times could cruise to the West Indies, and by this means the country could be annually provided with victuals.

18. If we are able to renew our friendly relations with the White and Black Minquas (as we are assured and may hope we shall), the trade with these will commence next April, and continue the whole summer until fall. Our present cargo may be sold during that time; therefore, it will be a matter of

necessity, to be provided with new cargoes next November, and about that time we may be able (with God's help) to have on hand a great deal of goods for the return cargo.

19. In the fourteenth paragraph of my former Report I submissively asked in what way the extra entertainment of foreign guests coming here shall be paid. We have in such things been as sparing as possible; however, the amount of the disbursement increases more and more, and the accidental revenues which are collected here and which have been assigned for this use will in no wise suffice.

20. The freemen already settled want to be paid the rest of their wages; and, whereas their intention is to continue to cultivate the land with that money, I think it advisable to pay them for the good of the country, and as an example for others. But their wives and relations in the old country should not be allowed to draw any of their wages, unless these can show the account from here, because every day we are obliged to give them more or less, according to their wants, and some are already fully paid.

21. The bookkeeper, Carl Johansson, who chanced to get into a misfortune in Kiexholm,¹ and for that reason was sent over to New Sweden, has been here six years, and has behaved very well the whole time. Three years ago I not only appointed him to take care of the stores, but also trusted him to receive and revise the commissary's monthly accounts, paying him ten rix-dollars a month as wages (to be ratified graciously by the Right Honorable Company), which service he in like manner has ever since faithfully performed. Now his submissive request is, by Her Royal Majesty's and the Right Honorable Company's favor, to be allowed to go home to the Kingdom for a while, with the next ship, to stay as long as it may please Her Royal Majesty, to settle his affairs there. His purpose for the future is to serve Her Royal Majesty and the Right Honorable Company willingly and faithfully, to the best of his ability, so long as he shall live, either here in New Sweden, or wheresoever else he may be assigned to duty.

22. Again, I humbly repeat the eighteenth paragraph of my last Report, purporting how I for a great while (namely

¹ Kexholm, a small town of Finland, fifty miles northeast of Viborg, on the west shore of Lake Ladoga.

twenty-eight years) have been in the service of my dear native country, constantly accompanying her armies to the field, and now have served in New Sweden one year and seven months beyond my prescribed term and brought everything into such order that Her Royal Majesty has obtained a strong footing here and that the work does not require anything but sufficient means, to be continued with greater success. Thus (with God's help) this country will forever be subject to Her Royal Majesty, who sent us here, maintained us among all the surrounding provinces, and brought the trade into good condition, and satisfactory relation with that of our neighbors, in-somuch that, if means fail not, they will remain satisfied with what has happened. Wherefore, my humble request to Her Royal Majesty and their Right Honorable Excellencies now is, that I be relieved, if possible, and sent home by the next ship to my beloved native land. Yet, I in no wise withdraw myself from the service of Her Royal Majesty and my native country, but I am desirous of doing duty on other occasions, seeking approval in nothing but for faithful service of Her Royal Majesty and my country, in accordance with my duty, so long as I shall live. My successor here (with God's help) will see and comprehend the diligence I have applied in everything, agreeably to my obligation.

23. The officers and soldiers here have frequently solicited that a faithful and proper man be sent home to the Kingdom, not only for the purpose of giving an oral account of the whole enterprise here, but also to procure an answer to the individual communications they have sent over. Not thinking it proper to refuse them this, I have deputed for that business the noble and valiant Johan Papegāja, hoping that he will both humbly deliver a good report to Her Royal Majesty and the Right Honorable Lords, and faithfully and diligently do his best in everything intrusted to him for the good of this work. Given at New Gothenburg, February 20. 1647.

JOHAN PRINTZ.