

Rum Punch and Cultural Revolution: The Impact of the Seven Years' War in Albany

Justin DiVirgilio

INTRODUCTION

Among the many consequences of military conflict is the cultural impact that results when large numbers of people are mobilized and pressed into contact with foreign groups. Although the British had governed the formerly Dutch colony of New York since 1664, assimilation of the former New Netherlanders into the English sphere proceeded slowly. This all changed when the Seven Years' War broke out, resulting in thousands of British soldiers being garrisoned in and around Albany. On the eve of conflict, this “medieval village perched on the northern periphery of the American frontier” was still dominated by the Dutch families that first settled the area.¹ With the war, the pace of cultural change quickened as Albany gained newfound strategic importance as a staging ground for operations at Fort William Henry and Fort Edward, where major campaigns of the war took place.

One particular manifestation of these changes was the nascence of a local rum industry. In 1758–59, while conflict raged between the British and the French for control of New York, a large-scale rum distillery was established by members of three of Albany's ethnically Dutch families. This facility, which was recently uncovered during archeological excavations along the historic shore of the Hudson River in the City of Albany, provides unique information regarding the acculturation of the local community.² Constructed in an English fashion and devoted to serv-

1. David G. Hackett, *The Rude Hand of Innovation: Religion and Social Order in Albany, New York 1652–1836* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 13.

2. Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., *Phase III Archeological Data Retrieval, Quackenbush Square Parking Facility, Albany, New York*, on file at the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Waterford, N.Y., 2005.

ing an English market, this early industrial facility was, in spite of the Dutch ancestry of its proprietors, thoroughly English in character.

PERSISTENCE AND CHANGE UNDER ENGLISH RULE

The intent of this paper is not to argue that Albany was a static society between the English conquest of 1664 and the beginning of the Seven Years' War, or that acculturation did not begin until the mid-eighteenth century. On the contrary, the gradual erosion of Dutch ways of life began almost immediately after the capitulation to the English. A series of institutional changes involving the courts, systems of taxation, and laws regulating land ownership placed the Dutch in an unfamiliar political milieu.³ The reactions of the Albany Dutch varied. Some were quick in recognizing that the route to political and economic power was through integration with the English, and adapted accordingly.⁴ By the early 1700s, many of Albany's "better sort" had gone as far as to leave the Dutch Reformed Church in favor of the Church of England. This group included several of Albany's mayors, members of the Governor's Council, and prominent families such as the Schuylers and Van Rensselaers.⁵

The majority, however, persisted for some time in speaking the language, attending the church, and maintaining the traditions of their ancestors. Only slowly did they become integrated into the English world. This fractioning of Albany Dutch society into a more rapidly anglicizing elite and an insular, traditional peasantry led to a stigmatization of Dutch culture. Dutch architecture, language, and social customs came to be viewed as backward, while that which was English, was associated with modernity.⁶

3. Donna Merwick, *Possessing Albany, 1630–1710, The Dutch and English Experiences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 197–201, 253.

4. Randall Balmer, *A Perfect Babel of Confusion: Dutch Religion and English Culture in the Middle Colonies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 9.

5. Balmer, 102.

6. This anti-Dutch bias was reflected in the observations of many visitors to Albany in the eighteenth century. See for example, Jedediah Morse, quoted in Joel Munsell, *Annals of Albany*, vol. I (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1850), 314.

STRONG DRINK IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ALBANY

Throughout most of the seventeenth century, rum was virtually unknown in Albany. There existed neither the custom of drinking rum nor the trade connections to ensure a reliable supply. While the English colonists in Boston were already exporting locally produced rum in the 1670s, the new British subjects in Albany continued much as they had under the Dutch, mostly brewing beer and distilling comparatively little liquor.

Strong drink was a part of everyday life for the early Dutch. It was present at “weddings, funerals, church-openings, deacon ordainings, and house-raising. No farm hand in haying-field, no sailor on a vessel, no workman in a mill, no cobbler, tailor, carpenter, mason, or tinker would work without some strong drink, some treat.”⁷ It was such an important component of cementing agreements that exceptions were made to an ordinance against tapping “after the ringing of the bell” for “the transactions of business, auctions and special meetings of strangers.”⁸ Even children imbibed. They were given cider and syllabub—a mixed drink of wine and cream.⁹

Beer was the most common alcoholic beverage in seventeenth-century Albany. It was made from wheat, owing to the abundance of that grain, and hops, and was “the heaviest beer . . . tasted in all New Netherland.”¹⁰ Though less popular, wine and grain-based “brandy” were also consumed.¹¹ What little distilling there was in Albany was

7. Alice Morse Earle, *Colonial Days In Old New York* (New York: Empire State Book Company, 1926).

8. A. J. F. Van Laer, ed., *Minutes of the Court of Albany, Rensselaerswyck and Schenectady, 1668–1673*, vol. I., trans. A. J. F. Van Laer (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1926), 117.

9. Anne Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady, with Sketches of Manners and Scenery in America, as they Existed Previous to the Revolution* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1846), 40.

10. Court minutes from the 1670s include a record of a dispute between a brewer and the individual he hired to collect hops. Van Laer, 65.

The quote is from Jasper Danckaerts, *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts, 1679–1680: Original Narratives of Early American History*, ed. Bartlett Burleigh James and J. Franklin Jameson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 221.

11. While in modern usage brandy refers to a beverage distilled from wine or fermented fruit juice, historically it was used to refer to a variety of liquors. A description of the Dutch “brandy” as being made from wheat is contained in Danckaerts, 244–45.

linked to brewing.¹² As was also the practice in New Amsterdam at the time, the dregs from brewing were used to distill liquor.¹³

RUM USE IN ALBANY

Before 1664, references to rum consumption in Albany are scant. In the early 1650s, there was an instance of a “Dutch trader . . . accused of lowering a keg of rum over the wall of Fort Orange to waiting Indians.”¹⁴ However, it was not until after the arrival of the English that rum became commonplace. The earliest evidence of rum use in Albany was in conjunction with the fur trade, the heart and soul of the community’s economy throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In 1673 “Antonia van Corlears was granted permission to sell rum to the Indians in Schaneghtede [Schenectady].”¹⁵ In 1678 rum formed part of the payment to Anaemhaenitt, a Mohican, for lands in present-day Rensselaer County.¹⁶ Wine and brandy continued to be traded for a time, though by 1700 rum was used almost exclusively.

Rum’s success in replacing the grain-based brandy that historically had been produced by the New Netherland Dutch was due at least in part to its low cost and ready availability.¹⁷ While the production of grain-based liquor detracted from the available food supply, rum was made with a byproduct of sugar refinement that had few other uses. In the 1680s, New York merchants complained that the distilling of brandy from local grain raised the price of flour and prevented it from being competitive.¹⁸ In response, New York governor Edmund Andros forbade distilling any grain unless it was unfit to be milled into flour.¹⁹

In the first half of the eighteenth century, rum use became widespread. In regard to the Indian trade, it was put to a malicious use. In

12. Janny Venema, *Beverwijk: A Dutch Village on the American Frontier, 1652–1664* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 446.

13. John James McCusker, Jr., “The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the Thirteen Continental Colonies, 1650–1775,” (diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1970), 441–42.

14. Shirley W. Dunn, *The Mohicans and Their Land, 1609–1730* (Fleischmanns, N.Y.: Purple Mountain Press, 1994), 143.

15. E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, vol. II (Albany: The State of New York, 1858), 653.

16. Dunn, 293.

17. McCusker, 59.

18. Danckaerts, 244–45.

19. McCusker, 443.

1722 the Mahican sachem Ampamit implored Governor William Burnet to prohibit the sale of rum to Native Americans.

When our people come from hunting to the Town or Plantations and acquaint the Traders & People that we want Powder and Shot & Clothing, they first give us a large cup of Rum, and after we get the Taste of it crave for more so that in fine all the Beaver & Peltry we have hunted goes for drink, and we are left destitute either of clothing or ammunition.²⁰

Nearly thirty years later, Albany merchants persisted in this exploitive practice. While visiting Albany in 1750, Peter Kalm described the use of rum by the local traders.

Indians are frequently cheated in disposing of their goods, especially when they are drunk, and sometimes they do not get one half or even one tenth of the value of their goods. I have been a witness to several transactions of this kind. The merchants of Albany glory in these tricks, and are highly pleased when they have given a poor Indian, a greater portion of brandy [prepared from sugar cane, i.e. rum] than he can stand, and when they can, after that, get all his goods for mere trifles.²¹

In regard to local consumption, rum was equally widespread. By the early 1700s, Albany merchants were trading directly with the West Indies, with shipments of lumber, wheat, and peas sent south in exchange for rum and money. Even the rural inhabitants of Albany County were accustomed to rum by the 1720s: “the farmer’s load of wheat [was taken] in exchange for a length of cloth, a keg of rum, or dishes for his wife.”²² Rum was so widely used by 1743, that it was considered “generally as good as money” by the wealthy Albany merchant Philip Livingston.²³ In 1750 Kalm observed that rum punch was “the

20. O’Callaghan, vol. V (Albany: The State of New York, 1855), 663.

21. Peter Kalm, *Peter Kalm’s Travels in North America: The English Version of 1770*, ed. Adolph P. Benson (New York: Dover, 1966 [1770]), 325, 342–43.

22. David Arthur Armour, *The Merchants of Albany, 1686–1760* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986), 161–62.

23. Armour, 168.

favorite drink of the Englishmen” in New York, while noting that the French in Canada despised it and mocked the English for their preference.²⁴ Other contemporary accounts demonstrate that punch and other drinks made with rum had also become popular among the Albany Dutch.²⁵ However, at this time the rum consumed in Albany came from elsewhere and was not produced there.

RUM PRODUCTION IN ALBANY

Colonial American rum distilling first began and ultimately had its greatest concentration in New England. By the 1660s, distillers in Newport, Rhode Island, had begun producing rum. Within a decade, Massachusetts rum was being exported to Newfoundland. The precise date that rum production began in New York is unknown, but sugar refining, an industry closely related to rum distilling, was initiated in New York in 1730.²⁶ New York’s first rum distilleries may date to about the same time. While in Boston alone there were more than twenty rum distillers by 1717, there were only two distilleries in the entire colony of New York as late as 1737.²⁷

Cadwallader Colden likely played a role in establishing New York’s rum industry. As the lieutenant governor of the colony, Colden took interest in promoting economic development.²⁸ In 1729 William

24. Kalm, 475. Hostility between the British and the French was reflected in their distaste for the preferred beverages of the other. While rum punch was a favorite of the English, the French in Canada “thoroughly despised [it], and laughed at the English who made it. They said that they scarcely wished to taste it, although they had been in the English provinces several times” (Kalm, 475). Meanwhile, among the English “*Rum* . . . [was] reckoned much wholesomer [*sic*] than brandy made from wine or grain. In confirmation of this opinion they say that if you put a piece of fresh meat into rum and another into brandy, and leave them there for a few months, that in the rum will keep as it was, but that in the brandy will be eaten and full of holes . . . Major Roderfort told me on that upon the Canada expedition he had observed that most of his soldiers who drank brandy for a time died; but those who drank rum were not hurt, though they got drunk with it every day for a considerable time,” Kalm, 325.

25. Grant, 40.

26. O’Callaghan, vol. I (Albany: Weed, Parsons, 1849), 729.

27. For information about Boston’s distillers, see Christopher R. Eck, “The Spirits of Massachusetts: Distillers and Distilling in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Boston,” (master’s thesis, University of Massachusetts, 1993), 73.

For statistics regarding the number of distilleries in New York, see O’Callaghan, vol. VI (Albany: The State of New York, 1855), 127.

28. Wayne Bodle, review of *Cadwallader Colden: A Figure of the American Enlightenment*, by Alfred R. Hoermann, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 60.2 (2003).

Douglass, a resident of Boston, responded to Colden's request for information about rum distilling as it was practiced in Boston. Douglass's letter contained a detailed description of the Bostonian method of making rum.²⁹ It is possible that this information provided the model for New York's early rum distilleries.

In spite of its popularity, rum production did not commence in Albany until the mid-eighteenth century. Understanding why this was the case is central to the argument, advanced in this paper, that the advent of the first distillery in Albany was a significant example of the community's acculturation. While the local market for rum expanded dramatically with the arrival of the British soldiers in 1756, it had certainly not been trivial before then. Admittedly, the social impact of rum on Native Americans (as described above) is not the ideal gauge with which to assay the quantity traded. Rum was a minor component of the Indian trade in terms of its value.³⁰ However, it is estimated that in 1770, long after the heyday of the fur trade in New York, about 10,000 gallons of rum were traded to the Native Americans.³¹ With significantly more being consumed by the colonists, there was certainly a sufficiently large market to support at least one small distillery.³²

That New York lagged behind its New England neighbors in the production of rum was due at least in part to its Dutch heritage. Unlike the New Englanders who acquired the taste for rum and the knowledge for making it from their fellow English colonists in the West Indies, the Albany Dutch inherited no such customs from their sugar-producing counterparts in the Dutch West Indies. Throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, while English merchants and distillers from New England circumvented the mercantilist designs of the motherland by smuggling molasses from the French islands and producing their own rum, the people of Albany continued much as they

29. *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden*, vol. VIII, "Additional Letters and Papers 1715–1748." *Collections of the New York Historic Society*, vol. LXVII (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1937), 191–92. Cited in Eck, 113–14.

30. Cadwallader Colden noted that New York had "a very considerable inland Trade with the Indians for Beaver other Furrs & Peltry & with the French of Canada for Beaver, all which are purchased with English Commodity except a small quantity of Rum." O'Callaghan, vol. I, 716.

31. McCusker, 502–04.

32. Eck, 73, estimates that in 1717, an average of 5,700 gallons were produced by each distiller in Massachusetts.

had during Dutch control of New Netherland.³³ The region's economy was still dependent on agriculture and the export of lumber, wheat, and furs.³⁴ Albany's manufactures were limited and did not include rum, which had been introduced by the English relatively recently. As will be described below, when rum production began in Albany it was not conducted in a manner unique to the region or the Dutch, but rather in a manner similar to the English colonists in Boston.

ALBANY DURING THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

The impetus for the construction of a distillery at Albany emerged out of circumstances surrounding the international conflict between France and Britain for control of the region. During the Seven Years' War, as Britain and France competed for control of northern New York, attention was focused on Albany as a strategically important location. Fresh from a stunning victory at Oswego, the French general Marquis de Montcalm focused his attention on the largely undefended Hudson Valley corridor early in the spring of 1756.³⁵ The French constructed Fort Carillon, later called Fort Ticonderoga by the British, at the southern tip of Lake Champlain. The British army responded with a flurry of construction at Fort William Henry, Fort Edward, and Fort Frederick in Albany.

People from the countryside surrounding Albany took refuge in the stockaded city. "They took shelter in every house, built shacks in the town's back gardens, and created a shantytown outside of the north gate."³⁶ Several thousand British soldiers and provincial troops also assembled at Albany and, during the winter, as many as 1,400 officers and troops were quartered in homes. "Albany's tightly circumscribed world was composed of seventy-five acres filled with 355 households and a teeming population of more than 4,000 natives, refugees, and soldiers." Over the following few years, as many as 30,000 soldiers were garrisoned in or passed through the city.³⁷

33. McCusker, 431–37.

34. Kalm, 332.

35. Edward P. Hamilton, *Fort Ticonderoga: Key to a Continent* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964), 38.

36. Hackett, 32.

37. Hackett, 33.

The British troops represented economic opportunity, both as an army in need of provisions and as idle men in want of entertainment. In 1746—well before the military buildup of the Seven Years' War—it cost £93,000 to supply provisions for about 1,600 British soldiers in Albany.³⁸ While syndicates composed of wealthy and powerful merchants in London, New York, and Boston were awarded the most lucrative victualing contracts, subcontracting opportunities were available to local merchants.

While liquor was not always included in the soldiers' official provisions, it was certainly available from sutlers and tavern-keepers.³⁹ Whatever the source, there was a great demand for alcohol, and the potential profit to be made from a cheap, locally produced supply was significant. Several rum transactions were recorded in the account books of the Albany merchant Robert Sanders, who was contracted to supply provisions to British troops stationed in Massachusetts during the Seven Years' War.⁴⁰ In 1759 Abraham Verplanck transported significant quantities of rum to Lake George and Crown Point.⁴¹ In June 1760 the merchant Abraham J. Lansing carried nine oxcart loads of Albany rum to Lake George, likely to Fort William Henry.⁴²

ALBANY'S FIRST RUM DISTILLERY

The clearest indication of the date of the first rum distillery in Albany comes from circumstantial evidence. The observations of Peter Kalm in 1750 demonstrate the lack of local rum production. "The boats which ply [the Hudson River] between Albany and New York . . . come home almost empty, and only bring a few kinds of merchandise with them, the chief of which is rum."⁴³ A map of the city in 1758 shows that

38. Lawrence H. Leder, "Military Victualing in Colonial New York," in *Business Enterprise in Early New York*, ed. Joseph R. Frese, S.J., and Jacob Judd (Tarrytown, N.Y.: Sleepy Hollow Press, 1979), 40.

39. Leder, 53.

40. Robert Sanders, Account book, 1754–1758, BD 8190, New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany. On Sanders' relation with Massachusetts, see Leder, 41.

41. Abraham Verplanck, Journal of a trip from Albany to Lake George and Crown Point. Abraham Verplanck Papers, 1758–1784, SC 17169, New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany.

42. Abraham J. Lansing, Account books. Rensselaer County Historic Society, Troy, N.Y.

43. Kalm, 332.

the site of the distillery was still vacant.⁴⁴ Since this map is well detailed, the omission of a building as substantial as the distillery is unlikely.

In 1759 Reverend Andrew Burnaby wrote of a very different situation from that described by Peter Kalm regarding the chief exports and manufactures of Albany.

They export chiefly grain, flour, pork, skins, furs, pig-iron, lumber, and staves. Their manufactures, indeed, are not extensive, nor by any means to be compared with those of Pennsylvania; they make a small quantity of cloth, some linen, hats, shoes, and other articles for wearing apparel. They make glass also, and wampum; refine sugars, which they import from the West Indies; and *distil* [sic] *considerable quantities of rum*.⁴⁵

During the 1750s, rum went from being one of Albany's chief imports to one of its principal manufactures. The fact that rum was a chief import in 1750 demonstrates how little was being produced locally. While it is clear from advertisements from later decades that Albany merchants continued to import rum, the considerable capacity for local production by 1759 demonstrates that they were no longer dependent on imported rum. The first rum still-house in Albany, the Douw-Quackenbush distillery (named for its founders Volckert A. Douw and Peter W. Quackenbush) was probably constructed in 1758–59.

THE DOUW-QUACKENBUSH DISTILLERY

The Douw-Quackenbush rum distillery was situated along the Hudson River one block beyond the northern gate of the Albany stockade, just north of the city's border. In December 1756 the Albany Common Council responded to complaints by British officers "of the grate abuse in selling Rum and other strong Liquors to Soldiers, which by means of their continual drinking impairs and weakens their constitutions and renders them unfit for duty." Accordingly, the common

44. *A Plan of Albany as it was in the Year 1758*. Map Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 1758.

45. Andrew Burnaby, *Travels Through the Middle Settlements in North-America In the Years 1759 and 1760, With Observation Upon the State of the Colonies* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Great Seal Books, 1960), 78.

council decreed that “no person whatsoever” was allowed “to sell any Rum or other strong Liquors to any Soldier or Soldiers whatsoever, or to any other person for their use.”⁴⁶ The distillery, however, was advantageously situated in the neighboring manor of Rensselaerwyck, outside of the jurisdiction of the Albany Common Council, but near enough to profit from the soldiers’ presence.

Both the architecture of the distillery building and the manner in which rum was distilled were English in character. The archeological remains of the distillery were remarkably well preserved, allowing the footprint of the entire facility to be exposed and mapped. It had a stone foundation measuring thirty-six by sixty feet, which supported a wooden superstructure. It housed the remnants of twenty-one large wooden vats, a network of wooden pipes connecting the vats, and the stone base for two stills and a chimney.

THE ARCHITECTURE

Based on the size of the distillery, it probably had a gabled roof, as did most large-scale buildings of the period in Albany. While the gable roof was used in the regional Dutch vernacular architecture, spans over twenty-five feet were generally dealt with by cantilevering the roof beyond that width from internal columns. While none of the wooden superstructure elements recovered from the site could be definitively associated with either a Dutch or English building tradition, the absence of interior columns in a building of its size strongly suggests that the roof was framed in an English method.⁴⁷

The Stadt Huys (ca. 1740) and the hospital were the largest buildings in Albany in the mid-eighteenth century, and both were covered by gable roofs. The barracks and Governor’s house at Fort Frederick (1756–57) had gable roofs that were framed with king posts.⁴⁸ The

46. Joel Munsell, comp., *Collections on the History of Albany*, vol. 1 (Albany, N.Y.: J. Munsell, 1865), 105–06.

47. This assessment of the architecture of the distillery was completed by Walter Richard Wheeler. For more information, see Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., *Phase III Archeological Data Retrieval, Quackenbush Square Parking Facility, Albany, New York*, on file at the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Waterford, N.Y., 2005.

48. Joel Munsell, comp., “Plan of Fort Frederick, At Albany,” *Annals of Albany*, vol. IV (Albany, N.Y.: Joel Munsell, 1853).

contemporary buildings were all constructed by a team of carpenters and “artificers” from Boston who were under the command of John Bradstreet and in the vicinity of Albany during the period ca. 1755–65. They were trained in English methods of construction, which differed from that in use in the upper Hudson Valley of the period. During gaps in patronage by the British government these “artificers” are known to have taken on private projects.⁴⁹ The possibility exists that some members of this group erected the distillery.

The fact that the proprietors of the distillery chose to construct the building in an English manner was more than a matter of mere expedience. There was no shortage of local know-how regarding the construction of large buildings—Dutch barns, many of which were equal in size or larger than the distillery, dotted the Hudson Valley landscape in the mid-eighteenth century.⁵⁰ When taken in the context of the increasing stigmatization of Dutch culture, the significance of this decision can be appreciated. By erecting an English structure, Douw and Quackenbush were rejecting traditional Dutch methods. By doing so, they were identifying the distillery as a modern venture and establishing themselves as members of the English colonial world.

THE DISTILLING METHOD

While techniques differed by geographic region, rum production followed a relatively simple process. Molasses and water were mixed and allowed to ferment for a period from one to two weeks. The fermented mixture, called *wash*, was then transferred to the still. When the contents of the still reached 173 EF, the spirits (i.e., the ethyl alcohol) were vaporized. The vapors were collected and diverted through a metal coil, called a *worm*, which was immersed in cold water to force condensation. The liquor was collected from the bottom of the coil.

In general, American distillers did little more than is described above. The liquor produced by the first distillation was known as *low wine*.⁵¹ While in “England the distiller commonly redistilled all his

49. John Bradstreet in Albany to Charles Apthorp in Boston, 3 December 1758. University Archives, Westport, Conn.

50. John Fitchen, *The New World Dutch Barn* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1968).

51. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1993). The “common rum” of the American Colonies was referred to as “low wine” by the British. In reality, they were the same thing.

low wines to produce a satisfactory spirit . . . the general practice in the Western Hemisphere considered the low wines a satisfactory rum.”⁵² There, rum was referred to as “common,” “merchantable,” or “proof.”⁵³ In contrast, the British only drank rum that was double- or triple-distilled. The principal distinction between the common rum of the colonial distillers and the “high proof” rum favored in England was the proportion of alcohol in each.

Given this basic understanding of distilling, much can be inferred about how it was practiced at the Douw-Quackenbush distillery, based on its interior layout and the information contained in an inventory of the facility from 1784. As the following discussion will demonstrate, there is a high degree of coincidence between rum-making methods in Boston, as described in the aforementioned letter from William Douglass to Cadwallader Colden, and the process as undertaken in Albany.

In addition to numerous fermentation vats, where the molasses and water were mixed, the distillery contained “One low wine Cistern.”⁵⁴ The presence of a low wine cistern implies that some or all of the liquor was distilled a second time. This is because, in contrast to standard usage, the term low wine in Boston and Albany was used to designate only the weakest liquor recovered from the first run through the still. Given that advertisements and correspondence referred to the product of the distillery as “common rum” as opposed to the more costly “high proof” rum, it is unlikely that all of the rum was double-distilled.⁵⁵ Instead, the Albany rum-makers probably mimicked the technique used in Boston and double-distilled only the weakest portion of each batch, which would have been collected in the low wine cistern.

As the contents of the still rose in temperature, the amount of water included in the vapors increased. Therefore, the percentage of alcohol was highest in the first liquor returned from the still, and decreased afterward. Without further processing it was too watery, but when distilled a second time it yielded additional “proof” spirit. According to Douglass’s description of Boston’s distillers, approximately 110 gallons put into the

52. McCusker, 153.

53. McCusker, 817.

54. Daniel Hale, “Inventory of sundry Articles belonging to the Distillery in Albany independent of the Buildings,” James Caldwell Papers, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, N.Y., 1784.

55. Daniel Hale, “Terms on which Daniel Hale is willing to Conduct the Distillery in Albany,” James Caldwell Papers, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, N.Y., 1784. Advertisement “FOR SALE by ROBISON & HALE,” *Albany Gazette*, 31 August 1786.

still would “yield 16 Gal. proof & 12 Gal. low wines.” When the low wines were distilled a second time, they would “give 4 gal. proof Spirit.”⁵⁶

The Douw-Quackenbush distillery contained “Three good *return* Cisterns” and a “return Pump with Iron bands.”⁵⁷ In Boston, the dregs left in the still when distilling was completed, referred to as “returned liquor,” were left to sit for “some time that the gross parts may Subside.”⁵⁸ When enough time had elapsed, the returned liquor was reused in the fermentation of the next batch. It was added to twice the quantity of water and the appropriate amount of molasses to a vat being readied for fermentation. The reason for this practice was apparently to minimize the amount of water that needed to be delivered to the distillery.

This discussion of salient aspects of the Douw-Quackenbush distillery and William Douglass’s description of rum production in Boston in 1729, demonstrate a high degree of coincidence. Whether or not Cadwallader Colden, the recipient of Douglass’s letter, actively promoted the Bostonian method, the similarity between it and rum production in Albany over a half century later demonstrates the relationship between the two.

It is of little surprise that the founders of the distillery turned to their New England neighbors to learn how to manufacture rum. As previously mentioned, the Albany Dutch were traditionally much more likely to brew beer than to distill liquor. With the declining use of the Dutch language and increasing demographic anglicization, the Netherlands were fading into irrelevance for the Albany community.⁵⁹ The English world which engulfed the city was the logical source for new ideas.

ALBANY’S RUM INDUSTRY AFTER THE SEVEN YEARS’ WAR

The decade following the Seven Years’ War was a period of growth for the Albany rum industry. The continued British military presence in New York Colony, the Indian trade, and the growing regional popu-

56. *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden*, vol. VIII, “Additional Letters and Papers 1715–1748,” *Collections of the New York Historic Society*, vol. LXVII (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1937), 191–92.

57. Hale, “Inventory”.

58. *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden*, vol. VIII, 191–92.

59. Balmer, 141–43.

lation prompted the construction of the second distillery near the city. During the Revolutionary War, Albany's rum distillers again profited from provisioning contracts. At the end of the century, local rum production reached its height.

CONCLUSIONS

The catalyst for the establishment of the Douw-Quackenbush distillery was the conflict between the British and French. In the 1750s, unprecedented numbers of British and provincial troops arrived at Albany. Supplying goods to the soldiers at Albany and the garrisons of the numerous forts to the north and west, both as official provisioners and through private sales, proved a boon to local merchants. Like the merchants, the distillery operators sought to profit through fulfilling the wants and needs of the garrisoned population. Through the investment of capital, the management of labor and materials, and the rationalization of the craft, the distillers increased their potential for profit. They assumed a role almost exclusively reserved for the mercantile colonial powers by importing raw material, manufacturing a finished good, and selling the product.

That members of long-settled, Dutch Albany families set out to produce a quintessentially British drink is evidence of the changing times. The manner of construction and the layout of the facility provide further evidence of English influence, demonstrating that the still-house was a product of the anglicized Albany culture.