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Peter Stuyvesant, Now Glowing but Still Glowering

Brighter? Definitely. Clearer? Without question. Vibrant? Dazzlingly so.
Warmer and fuzzier? Never.



St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery David W. Dunlap/The New York Times

By David W. Dunlap
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For this is the famously irascible Peter Stuyvesant, the director-general of New Amsterdam from 1647 to 1664. No matter how gorgeously his commemorative window at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery has been restored, no matter how resplendent Stuyvesant appears in his gold and scarlet uniform, he still does not look like a man one would cross.

Stuyvesant brooked no dissent. It was *mijn weg* or the highway. After years of skirmishing with townsfolk over whose interests would prevail in New Amsterdam —

those of the settlers or those of the corporate sponsor, the West India Company — Stuyvesant ended his rule by handing over control to the English. He retired to a farm, or *bouwerie*, that included the land on which St. Mark's now stands.

The window, designed by the stained-glass master D. Maitland Armstrong, was installed in 1903 almost directly over the entrance to the Stuyvesant family burial vault under St. Mark's, 131 East 10th Street. It was a gift of the Society of Daughters of Holland Dames, descendants of early settlers whose mission includes establishing "commemorative and durable memorials" of the Dutch period.

The society, which sponsored the restoration of a stained-glass window at the New-York Historical Society in 2011, underwrote the \$26,000 cost of restoring the Stuyvesant window, badly soiled and buckling precariously out of its frame after years of inattention.

The Rev. Winnie Varghese, the rector of St. Mark's, said Elbrun Kimmelman, a member of the Dutch society, and her husband, Peter Kimmelman, walked right up to her during an informal coffee hour following a Sunday service. "They said, 'We heard you're the new priest and would you be interested in restoring the window?'" Ms. Varghese recalled. "And I said, 'Yes.'



Another window at St. Mark's shows the kind of damage that was repaired on the Stuyvesant memorial: buckling and loss of glass. David W. Dunlap/The New York Times

William Murray Studios of Alford, Mass., was chosen for the job. The window was taken away last spring and returned on Oct. 18, two days before Ms. Varghese, who had been the priest in charge at St. Mark's for three years, was installed as its rector. The newly restored window is to be formally unveiled in a ceremony on Friday commemorating Stuyvesant's 400th birthday. (An earlier and incorrect birth date on the window, 1592, was altered by the artisans at William Murray to 1612.)

“We’re hoping to use it to inspire contributors to other windows,” said Mrs. Kimmelman, who is currently directress general of the society. Two bays away from the Stuyvesant window, for example, a window depicting Augustine of Canterbury has buckled so badly that large pieces of glass have simply fallen out. The scrappy, hardscrabble parish of St. Mark’s could scarcely take on such expensive restoration projects itself.

Mrs. Kimmelman is descended from the 17th-century settlers Pieter Jansen Slot (also spelled Slotd) and Marritie van Winckel, who lived in the 1680s at “Crommesshe near Stuyvesant’s Bowery.” The name Crommesshe was corrupted by the English into Gramercy. She said she would like to rehabilitate Stuyvesant’s crusty reputation, acknowledging that “he had in his own mind a clear idea of what was right and what was wrong.”