

Zacharias Sickels VanWeenen - the Patriarch

As the American progenitor of the Sickels Family, Zacharias Sickels played a prominent role in the early colonial settlements of New Amsterdam and Albany.

Principals

Zacharias Sickels VanWeenen Sr

BIRTH abt. 1630 • Wien, Vienna, Austria

DEATH abt. 1705 • Harlem, Manhattan, New York City, New York

Married: 1663 or 1664

Maryken Lambertse Van Valkenburg

BIRTH 5 OCT 1642 • New Amsterdam, Manhattan Island, America

DEATH May 1687 • Albany, Albany, New York

Introduction

Rarely, in American genealogical research, does one find a single person from whom sprang the sum total of all descendants of a family. It's a first for me. Zacharias Sickels Sr (the author's 9th grandfather) is solely responsible for all people in the United States who have a Sickels surnamed ancestor.

Zacharias Sickels Sr was an early settler of New Amsterdam/Netherland, New Jersey and Albany, New York. He was a close associate of Peter Stuyvesant, Director-General of New Netherlands from 1647-1664. He was a man of many talents and supremely adaptable to political and physical changes.

The surname, Sickels or Sickles (also Syckelse), may be an Austrian form of Sickl, a cognate of German, Sikkel. Or, alternatively, it could be a form of the Dutch, Sikkel. Regardless, by the end of the eighteenth century, with 25 Sickles-named households in 1790, the Sickles family had become established in many New York counties. Three generations later, the descendants of Zacharias Sickles had spread across the United States.

Zacharias Sickels Sr is fairly well documented. In the references are five biographies of the Sickels family that were compiled between 1865 and 1955. They are remarkably similar in their descriptions of the life of Zacharias Sr. Likely they borrowed from each other. From these and several other sources I will reconstruct a chronological history of Grandfather Sickels. Let's get started.

1630 - 1664

Most historians establish the birth of Zacharias Sickels VanWeenen Sr as 1630, in Vienna, Austria. It's thought that his parents were Zacharias VanWeenen (1610-1659) and Belilji Belitje (surname unknown, 1612-1640).

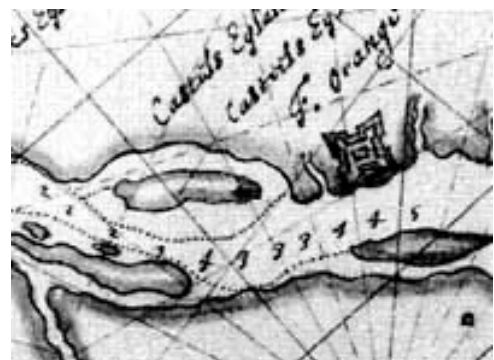
According to an article in the Brooklyn Eagle, May, 1896, setting out the charter of the *Society of The Colonial Daughters of the Seventeenth Century*, Zacharias 'Sickles' [sic] was one of their original seven charter member defined ancestors.

grims; Zacharias Sickles, the Huguenot soldier, who when driven from France fled to Holland and came to New Amsterdam with Petrus Stuyvesant; the soldier, Timothy Edwards;

If this is correct, then it's entirely possible that Zacharias Sickels VanWeenen Sr was French, not Austrian. And, he was a **Huguenot** soldier. The history of the Huguenots, Reformation Era French Protestants, is well documented. According to The Huguenot Society of America, "during the entire period between the early part of the sixteenth century to 1787, thousands of Huguenots left their homes in France for other countries because of recurring waves of persecution. Huguenot settlers immigrated to the American colonies directly from France and indirectly from the Protestant countries of Europe, including the Netherlands, England, Germany, and Switzerland."

Thusly, as a young **Huguenot** soldier fleeing France for the Netherlands, he made his way to Amsterdam and joined the Dutch West India Company. In support of the Dutch West India Company's overseas colonies, he was sent on a Dutch fleet to Curaçao, where he remained until 1655, attaining the rank of cadet/corporal.

Peter Stuyvesant (Abt. 1610-Aug. 1672) was the Dutch Director-General of New Netherlands/New Amsterdam from 1647-1664 (when the Dutch capitulated and ceded New Netherlands to the British). Upon being appointed to this post in Dec. 1646, Peter left Amsterdam with his new wife, Judith Bayard, and sailed to Curaçao. There, he met a young cadet/corporal Zacharias Sickels, making him his assistant. In 1655, Stuyvesant again visited Curaçao. He reassigned Zacharias to the garrison at Fort Orange in the Albany settlement, the first permanent Dutch settlement at New Netherlands/Amsterdam, where he served between 1656 and 1659, attaining the rank of colonel. Likely, he was sent there to help protect the trade interests, with



reporting to Peter Stuyvesant, of the Dutch West India Company over those of the original private settlers.

Following the Dutch capitulation of New Amsterdam and Fort Orange to the British in 1664, Zacharias Sickels Sr remained in the Albany settlement. There, he met Anna Lambertse Van Valkenburgh, the daughter of Lambert Jochemse VanValkenburg and Annetje Jacobs-Van Valkenburgh, early settlers of New Amsterdam, having arrived about 1644. Zacharias Sickels and Anna VanValkenburg married about 1663-1664 at the Albany settlement.

1665 - 1698

In Albany, Zacharias Sickels Sr settled into life primarily as a carpenter. He supplemented his income by being elected “town herder” for various time periods between about 1671 and 1683. For this, he was paid 18 Dutch Guilders per head. And, in 1689, he was assigned the job of “*Rattel Watch*” (or ratel wacht).

In the early Dutch and British Colonial period, the *Rattle Watch*, formed in 1658, was an important position. Basically, the *Rattle Watch* was the earliest version of a public supported policing patrol or town watch. The name derived from the wooden rattles that the patrol would carry. Men (usually teams of eight) walked the streets of New Amsterdam/Albany from dusk to dawn. They would call out the hours all night long and, if they heard anything, shake their rattles to scare the person away and call for help. They also served as a means for people to report grievances. It was a system specifically designed to avoid confrontation and gather information.

These watchmen would carry long poles with lanterns that dangled from the top with green tinted glass. During this time, there were no street lights, and given that it was dark, the green lanterns were carried so that citizens could identify a patrolman easily. When the lawmen returned, they hung their lanterns on a hook by the front door of the watch house to show they were on the job. Today, green lights are still placed outside the entrances of police stations as a symbol that the “watch” is present and vigilant.

According to “*A Family Tree of the Five Harvey Brothers*”, a Rattle Watchman wore a helmet, doublet of armour, armguards and mailed gauntlets. He carried a halberd lance and an hourglass. The rattle was an elaborate clacker having a wooden tongue mounted on a resonator, all of which rotated and whirred against a ratchet in the handle. He was “town crier” to call the citizenry together on needed occasions, and “keeper of the city gates, to close them and lock them at night and to open them in the morning.”



By 1693, the Zacharias Sickels Sr family had relocated to New York City where he may have been a Tapster (bar tender). Earlier, in 1669, Zacharias purchased a large tract of land across the Hudson River from New York in, what would become, Bergen County, New Jersey. His son, Robert (the author's 8th grandfather), settled on that land and raised a large family of at least eight children.

In 1698, Zacharias Sickels Sr was declared and admitted as a "Freeman". The term "Freeman" originated in 12th century Europe and basically meant - a person who was not a slave. For Zacharias, this Freeman declaration may have been indicative of his previous status as an indentured servant. "Freedom" was attained after an allotted time or after the person demanding payment was satisfied. Many immigrants to the colonies came as indentured servants, with someone else paying their passage to the Colonies in return for a promise of service. A Freeman was said to be free of all debt, owing nothing to anyone except God Himself.



Let's take a brief look at the eight known children of Zacharias and Anna Sickels. Some of the children are well documented, some are not. What is listed is a best consensus of researchers:

- **Robert Sickels** (1664-1729), born and married at Albany about 1686 Geertruy "Gertrude" Hendrickse Reddenhasen (1665-1754). They lived on property originally owned by his father, Zacharias, in Bergen, New Jersey. They had at least 11 children. The children of Robert and Gertrude Sickels scattered through the Bergen County area where many descendants still live.
- **Lambert Sickels** (about 1666-1722), born at Albany, moved to New York and married Maria Jans
- **Anna Sickels** (1667-1728), born and married at Albany about 1682 Abraham Isaac Van Deursen; they moved to New York about 1695. They had about six children.
- **Elizabeth Sickels** (1668-1728), born at Albany, moved to New York. Married about 1694, Willem Paren. They had about four children.

- **Zacharias Sickels Jr** (1670-1729), born at Albany, moved to New York and married (1) about 1693 Maria Brevoort; married (2) about 1717 Wyntje Dykman. With Maria, they had about five children. They had about five children.
- **Thomas Sickels** (1676-about 1725), born at Albany, moved to New York and married 1702, Jannetie Brevoort, daughter of Jan Hendricks Brevoort of New York. They had about 13 children.
- **Grietje Sickels** (1684-1762), born at Albany.
- **Lea Sickels** (1687-?), born at Albany, moved to New York. Had one child, Martha, unknown husband.

The precise years of death for Zacharias Sickels Sr and his wife, Anna Valkenburgh-Sickels are not known. Some speculate Zacharias died Oct 1729. However, a son, Zacharias Sickels Jr, also died in 1729. So, it's likely Zacharias Sr was not nearly 100 years old at his death. We know he was declared a Freeman in 1698 in New York City. After that, we have no other known records. I speculate he died in New York City about 1705. As for Anna, the only death records we have are unofficial family tree dates of May 1687.

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