

Louis DuBois of Seventeenth-Century New Netherland Walloon Founder of New Paltz, New York

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Flag of New Netherland

Louis DuBois was a Walloon who immigrated to New Netherland in the final years of Dutch rule over the colony. The Dutch who settled in New Netherland believed that the colony offered more possibilities for prosperity than did Holland for themselves and their children. They were not fleeing persecution in their native country. However, they were not the only group of Europeans to settle in New Netherland in the seventeenth century. Protestants from other countries, persecuted at home, found refuge in the Dutch colony. Among them were the Walloons, a French-speaking but distinct ethnic group located in what is now southern Belgium and Northern France. They are often lumped together with the Protestant French Huguenots. Peter Minuit, the third Director of New Netherland, was a Walloon.

The name DuBois is spelled a number of ways in the early records of New Netherland, including the following: Lowies de Boey, Lowi Duboi, Lowies Du Booy, and Lowies Du Bois. It helps that women in the Dutch colony retained their maiden name in the church records. The name of Louis' wife Cateryn Blanchan is easily recognizable.

A nice summary of the life of Louis DuBois is found in *History of the Huguenot Emigration to America*, written by Charles Baird in 1885. According to Baird, Louis was the son of Chrétien du Bois, a resident of the hamlet of Wicres, near Lille, Flanders. In the seventeenth century, the province of Flanders was under the rule of Roman Catholic Spain. Today, Lille is in French Flanders, near the French border with Belgium. Louis was born there on October 27, 1627. As a young man, Louis joined other countrymen in moving to Frankenthal, near Mannheim in the lower Palatinate of Germany. This region offered a haven for the Walloons and Huguenots fleeing persecution based on their religion. On October 10, 1655, Louis married Catharine, daughter of Mathèse (Mathew) Blanchan, another refugee from French Flanders. (Baird)

While the French-speaking Protestants had been treated kindly by the Germans in Mannheim, many came to believe that America offered more security against religious oppression and greater opportunity for a better life. Louis' father-in-law, Mathèse Blanchan, along with Anthony

Crispell, who had also married a daughter of Mathèse, came to America on the *Gilded Otter*, arriving in New Amsterdam in June of 1660. They immediately proceeded ninety miles up the Hudson River to Wildwyck (later known as Esopus and later still, Kingston). Louis, his wife and two young boys followed either later that year or in 1661. Louis immediately joined Mathew Blanchan and Anthony Crespel, who had settled at Hurley (originally called the New Village), near Esopus. Cateryn Blanchan would soon deliver her third child. Jacob DuBois was baptized at the Old Dutch Church in nearby Kingston in October of 1661. In 1674, Louis DuBois was listed as a magistrate in Hurley. (Baird, *History of the Huguenot Emigration to America; The History of Ulster County, New York*)

There were ongoing conflicts between the indigenous peoples and the Dutch settlers of New Netherland. The natives did not appreciate the harsh treatment meted out by Peter Stuyvesant, the Dutch Director-General. Settlements were vulnerable to attack by unfriendly natives. On June 10, 1663, the native peoples set fire to Hurley and part of Kingston. Three men were killed. Louis' wife Cateryn and their three children were among the twenty-three women and children who were taken captive by the natives. (Different sources report different numbers of captives.) Fortunately, they were rescued three months later by an expedition led by Captain Crieger which surprised the natives at their fort "near the Hogabergh in Shawangunk." The captives were being held for ransom or exchange and had been unharmed. Louis DuBois was a member of that expedition. It is said that the search for the captives led to the discovery of the lowlands along the Wallkill which later became the site for the town of New Paltz. That name was chosen to honor "*Die Pfalz*," the region of present-day Germany which had offered the Walloons refuge from religious persecution. (Baird and LeFevre)

Louis and Catharine had at least ten children. Abraham (B. abt.1657) and Isaac (B. abt. 1659) were born in Mannheim. Jacob (B. Oct 9 1661), Sarah (B. Sept 14, 1664), David (B. Mar 13, 1667), Rebecca (B. June 18, 1671), and Ragel (Apr. 1675) are listed on the baptism records of the Dutch Reformed Church in Kingston. In addition, Solomon, Louis Jr., and Matthew are also listed as sons of Louis DuBois; they, too, were born in Ulster County and their names appear in DuBois' wills and land transfers. (*Baptism and Marriage Records of the Old Dutch Church of Kingston, Ulster County, New York; Baird, History of the Huguenot Emigration to America; LeFevre History of New Paltz, New York and Its Old Families (from 1678-1820), 280-287*)

On May 26, 1677, Louis DuBois and his partners purchased a tract of land of approximately 36,000 acres from the Esopus Indians and established the town of New Paltz in 1678. The owners of the land were Louis DuBois and 11 other patentees, including his sons Abraham and Isaac. Another was his brother-in-law Anthony Crespel. All but one (Hugo Freer) were united by blood or marriage. This was a Huguenot settlement. For the first 40 years, French was the language spoken in New Paltz. For the next 70 years it was Dutch or a combination of French and Dutch. It was not until the time of the American Revolution that English came into common use in the town. It was one of the earliest settlements in Ulster County, following Kingston and Hurley. The "patentees" or first settlers built log houses along what came to be known as Huguenot Street in New Paltz. These were replaced by stone houses in the early years of the eighteenth century. (*The History of Ulster County*)

CHAPTER XXIV.

TOWN OF NEW PALTZ.

By HON. JOHN N. VANDERLYN.

ONE of the most interesting of the original settlements in Ulster County, or elsewhere, is the Huguenot Settlement of New Paltz. The land on which these Frenchmen and their families settled was not patented to them as trustees, for the benefit of the whole, but to a copartnership of the twelve individuals for their personal use, either as a body corporate or subject to division, presumably in twelve equal shares.

The settlement was one of the earliest after that of Kingston and Hurley, but it is generally supposed that some of the patentees had settled there some years previous to the date of the patent. The following documents, which are still extant, show the purchase from the Indians, and the subsequent confirmation by the patent. (The manuscript is in Dutch.):—

"By approbation of his Excellency, Governor Edmund Andross, dated April 28, 1677, an agreement is made on this date, the 26th of May, of the year 1677, for the purchase of certain lands between the parties named herein and the undersigned Esopus Indians.

"Matsayay, Nekahakaway, Magakahas, Assimerakan, Wawawanis, acknowledge to have sold to Lowies du Booy and his partners the land described as follows:—

"Beginning from the high hills at a place called Moggonck, from thence south-east toward the river to a point named Juffrous Hoock, lying in the long reach, named by the Indians Magaatramis, then north up along the river to the Island called by the Indians Raphoes, then west toward the high hills to a place called Waratahaes and Tawentagui, along the high hills southwest to Moggonck, being described by the four corners with everything included within these boundaries, hills, dales, waters, etc., and a right of way to the Rouduyt Kill as directly as it can be found, and also that the Indians shall have the same right to hunt and fish as the Christians, for which land the Indians have agreed to accept the articles here specified:—

"40 kettles, 10 large and 30 small; 40 axes; 40 shirts; 400 fathoms of white net-work; 300 fathoms of black net-work; 60 pairs of stockings, half small sizes; 100 bars of lead; 1 keg of gunpowder; 100 knives; 4 kegs of wine; 40 oars; 40 pieces of "duffel" (heavy woolen cloth); 60 blankets; 100 needles; 100 awls; 1 measure of tobacco; 2 horses—one stallion and one mare.

"Parties on both sides acknowledge to be fully satisfied herewith, and have affixed their own signature *ad ut Supra*.

"Matsaya X (his mark)	"Andrie Lefeber
"Wachtonck X (his mark)	"Jan Broecq
"Seneraken X (his mark)	"Piere Doyo
"Magakahoos X (his mark)	"Anthony Crespel

The sale of the land upon which New Paltz was built, from "The History of Ulster County, New York," A. T. Clearwater, Ed. The signature of "Lowies Du Booy" appears on the next page.

but in kitchens, backrooms, attics and cellars of their white masters.

Individuals who owned farms in New Netherland faced an acute shortage of farm labor. The Dutch and other Europeans who had come as farm laborers under contract regularly left the fields to work in the trades. In 1664, New Amsterdam surrendered to the English and the slave trade increased. The following year, in 1655, the first large shipment of slaves to come directly from Africa arrived in New Amsterdam. In the 18th century, only Charleston and New Orleans would have more slaves than New York.

Many of the settlers at New Paltz purchased slaves to labor in the fields and in the homes of their masters. Other settlements in the Hudson River Valley also had slaves. In 1674, Louis DuBois purchased two slaves at a public auction in Kingston, three years before the founding of New Paltz (DuBois Family Association website). Slavery in New Paltz was well established by 1755. The census of that year lists 28 slaveholders and together they owned 78 slaves over the age of 14. Solomon DuBois owned seven; Simon DuBois owned six. Others on the list, holding fewer

Slavery was an accepted institution in seventeenth-century New Netherland. The first slaves arrived in New Amsterdam about 1626. By the late 1630s there were one hundred enslaved people in New Amsterdam, or about one third of the population. These individuals initially worked for the Dutch West India Company. They worked on company farms (boweries), building and repairing forts, clearing land and building roads. In 1653, Peter Stuyvesant used African slaves and other laborers to construct a stronger earth and timber palisade along what would later become Wall Street. In the 1650s, more local residents came to own slaves who often worked as household servants, porters, and carpenters. Slaves in New Netherland learned to speak Dutch. They dressed in Dutch clothes and adopted Dutch traditions. Between 1639 and 1664, 27 couples of African descent were married in the Dutch Reformed Church in New Amsterdam. Generally the number of slaves per household was between one and four, rarely more. Slaves did not live segregated in slave quarters,

slaves, included Louis DuBois, Jr. Benjamin DuBois, and Hendrias DuBois (Platt). By 1790 there were 77 slave holders owning a total of 302 slaves, that is, 13% of the population of 2,309 individuals (*The New Paltz Register of Slaves*). Prosperity in New Paltz was built on slave labor. In 2013, Susan Stressin-Cohn, Director of Education at Historic Huguenot Street noted, “Every family on [historic Huguenot] street had slaves, from the end of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century.” (Platt)

It is notable that Catherine Blanchan, the widow of Louis DuBois who later married Jean Cottin, sought to free her slaves after her death. Her will, written in French, read in part “that the freedom, dated Sept. 22, 1702, which I have given to Rachel, as her name is now after having been baptized Sera, shall remain in force, and that she shall have 30 pieces of eight from said third part of the profits, and other things, as appears in said manumission, and she shall have it before my children divide their shares of my third interest in said profits.” “I will that the letter of manumission, dated August 17, 1709, which I have given to our negress, Dina, shall remain in force, and be properly observed.” The surviving children of Louis DuBois and Catherin Blanchan were also mentioned by name in her will: Abraham Du Bois, Jacob Du Bois, David Du Bois, Mathier Du Bois, Solomon Du Bois, Louis Du Bois, Sara and Isaac (deceased). The will was proved in court on December 10, 1713. (*Ulster County, NY Probate Records, 83-85*)

In 1686, nineteen years after the founding of New Paltz, Louis DuBois moved to Kingston and became one of the judges in the county. He died there ten years later, in 1696, at the age of 68. Two wills of Louis have survived. There is a will dated March 27, 1694 for “Lowies Du Bois,” originally written in the Dutch language. Abraham was listed as his eldest son in this will. Other children listed were: Jacob, David, Solomon, Lowies, Matthew, Isaac and Sara. Each of the children were to receive an eighth of the estate. Isaac was deceased at this time and his share of the estate was to go to his children. A second will, dated February 22, 1695/6 and also written in Dutch, gives more specific details about the dispersal of his property among his children. According to this latter will, Louis had property in Hurley, Kingston, and New Paltz. The last will was proved on June 23, 1696, suggesting that Louis died in June of that year. (*Ulster County, N.Y. Probate Records; History of New Paltz, New York and Its Old Families (from 1678-1820)*)

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