

Etched portrait, small repair lower right

HOLLAR’S HANDSOME VIRGINIAN

Unus Americanus ex Virginia Aetat 23 / W. Hollar ad vivum delin. et fecit 1645.

Author
HOLLAR, Wenceslaus

Publication date
1645.

Publisher

Publication place
[Antwerp],

Physical description
Etched portrait, small repair lower right

Dimensions
100 by 75mm. (4 by 3 inches).

Notes
First state, without the * after the date, of a handsome half-length portrait, identified by Hollar as being of a twenty-three-year old man from Virginia. Adorned with a beaded shell necklace, an ornamental headband from which hangs a row of teeth, and facial tattoos, the young man turns towards the artist with an enigmatic smile.
The ‘sitter’ has been identified by George R. Hamell, as a Munsee-Delaware Algonquian-speaking warrior called Jaques, who was transported to Amsterdam from New Amsterdam in 1644. Probably

from the Lenapehoking territory – a region encompassing the modern-day western Long Island, New York, New Jersey, the Eastern Pennsylvania area, and the Hudson Valley, “north from the river’s mouth to about Catskill on the west bank and Tivoli on the east, then west to the upper Delaware Valley, and east to about the New York – Connecticut border” (Stama).
He was probably captured in the early 1640s, in the then recently founded New Netherland colony, during the brutal “Governor Keift’s War”. Willem Kieft (1597-1647) became director of the new colony in September of 1637. In 1639, he “initiated a policy of levying taxes of maize and furs on the local Indian tribes. Taxes and misunderstandings eventually led to a full-scale, though sporadic, Dutch-Indian war, which raged on and off from 1640 to 1645. Kieft overrode the objections of his colonists and authorized a brutal massacre of Weckquaskee Indians at Pavonia (25–26 Feb. 1643). This short-term victory made the Indian war more intense; in response nearly all the Indian tribes joined together and fought against the Dutch. When a peace was finally concluded (30 Aug. 1645), the Indians had suffered 1,600 casualties, and New Amsterdam had shrunk to a population of only 250 persons. At the height of the Indian conflict, Kieft was denounced from the pulpit by Everardus Bogardus and was nearly assassinated by an irate colonist. The Eight Select Men, a new representative body, wrote a long memorial to the lords of the West India Company on 28 October 1644 asking for a new governor. In response to this and to numerous other complaints, the West India Company replaced Kieft with Petrus Stuyvesant, who arrived at New Amsterdam in May 1647” (Samuel Willard Crompton, for ANB).
Keift is recorded as having given away native captives, as the spoils of war. Vaughan records one such being given to the Governor of Bermuda, and another, “a wild Indian named Jaques”, to two soldiers employed by the West India Company, who transported him to Amsterdam. Once there, he was exhibited for profit and toured around Europe. As slavery was prohibited in the United Provinces, the soldiers entered a legal agreement with the contractors which made Jaques, at least nominally, a free servant. His meagre payment however was to be received in room and board, clothing, and lessons in Christianity and the Dutch language. The two soldiers received all the profit from his exhibition.
Even though Jaques is now known to be from the northeast of North America, he is called a Virginian by Hollar. This is probably a generic term, referencing the language spoken by him, and instigated by Thomas Harriot (1560-1621), author of the first English account of North America, ‘A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia’, 1588, and subsequently given European currency, when it was published by Theodore de Bry in several languages in 1590. Harriot had studied what he called ‘the Virginian language’, actually the Algonquin dialect, from two Native Americans, Manteo and Wanchese, brought back to England by Ralegh’s men in 1584.
Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677) was a Czech-born engraver, printmaker and cartographer. He joined the train of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel while he was travelling through Europe and returned to England with the earl in 1627. Hollar lived in London between 1636 and 1644 and made the drawings for his famous panorama, ‘London’, 1647, then, probably supplementing them by referring to an earlier panorama of London by Claes Visscher when he came to publish it in 1647. As an immigrant in the service of a recusant Catholic lord, he had judged it best to leave England when the Civil War began. Luckily for history, this meant that he kept the Globe Theatre in the picture, although it had been demolished three years earlier.

Bibliography

See George R. Hamell’s unpublished paper ‘Jaques: A Munsee from New Netherland, 1644’ (1996) as cited by Simon Turner in New Hollstein; New Hollstein (Hollar Part III) 816 II/I; Pennington 2009 ii/i; Stama ‘From Homeland to New Land: A History of the Mahican Indians, 1600-1830’, page 53; Vaughan ‘Transatlantic Encounters. American Indians in Britain, 1500-1776’, page 102.

Provenance

Provenance: Collector’s mark R.S., on verso, Lugt L.2239b, unidentified

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