



# **The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony That Shaped America**

*Russell Shorto*

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When the British wrested New Amsterdam from the Dutch in 1664, the truth about its thriving, polyglot society began to disappear into myths about an island purchased for 24 dollars and a cartoonish peg-legged governor. But the story of the Dutch colony of New Netherland was merely lost, not destroyed: 12,000 pages of its records—recently declared a national treasure—are now being translated. Drawing on this remarkable archive, Russell Shorto has created a gripping narrative—a story of global sweep centered on a wilderness called Manhattan—that transforms our understanding of early America.

The Dutch colony pre-dated the “original” thirteen colonies, yet it seems strikingly familiar. Its capital was cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic, and its citizens valued free trade, individual rights, and religious freedom. Their champion was a progressive, young lawyer named Adriaen van der Donck, who emerges in these pages as a forgotten American patriot and whose political vision brought him into conflict with Peter Stuyvesant, the autocratic director of the Dutch colony. The struggle between these two strong-willed men laid the foundation for New York City and helped shape American culture. **The Island at the Center of the World** uncovers a lost world and offers a surprising new perspective on our own.

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