

Was Gerrit Nieuwoudt really a NIEUWOUDT?

According to *De Villiers/Pama* all the children by the *stamvader* **Isaak Nieuwoudt** (from Amsterdam) by his wife **Anna van Wyk** are shown to have been baptised - except for **Gerrit Nieuwoudt** (listed as **b3**):

b1	Helena = 9 October 1718
b2	Jeremias = 17 November 1720
b3	Gerrit = omstr. 1722 [sic]
b4	Alida = 13 February 1724
b5	Johannes = 15 July 1725
b6	Alida = 30 November 1727
b7	Izaak = 16 July 1730
b8	Anna Catharina = 2 March 1732

The fact that Gerrit Nieuwoudt's baptism is not listed begs further enquiry. Is his record of baptism missing? No baptism could be found for the period 1720-1724. In view of the fact that he married *in church* on 26 April 1739 **Johanna Steenkamp**, however, we can safely assume that he had indeed been baptised - the ritual of baptism being a prerequisite before marriage *in church* could take place.

De Villiers/Pama, however, also omit a marriage date for the *stamouers*. We are nevertheless informed that at the time Isaak Nieuwoudt married Anna van Wyk, he was a widower. Anna van Wyk herself is omitted from the *De Villiers/Pama* genealogies of the Van Wyk families.¹

Elsewhere in *De Villiers/Pama*, there is also mention of one **Anna / Johanna van Wyk** being the [*de facto*] wife (*circa* 1716) of **Gerrit Willemse** from Leeuwarden in Friesland. **Significantly, this woman was mother to a son by Gerrit Willemse baptised *Gerrit* on 2 May 1717. Could he be our elusive **Gerrit Nieuwoudt**? Was he the *adoptive* son of Isaak Nieuwoudt but the *biological* son of Gerrit Willemse?**

Further enquiry reveals that Isaak Nieuwoudt and Anna van Wyk were married at the Groote Kerk in Cape Town on 6 February 1724. This confirms that only the children enumerated as b4-b8 (ie Alida, Johannes, Alida, Izaak and Anna Catharina) were born *in* wedlock. The first 3 children (ie Helena, Jeremias and Gerrit) appear to have been *voorkinders* born *out* of wedlock. Although later legitimised by the parent's belated marriage, their initial illegitimacy, however, did not prevent the church from baptising them. Nevertheless, we are still left with one outstanding baptism - that of Gerrit Nieuwoudt.

¹ Her true identity will be the subject of a future article.

We must again pose the question: Was Gerrit Nieuwoudt in actual fact only an adoptive son of Isaak Nieuwoudt being the biological son of Gerrit Willemse and Isaak Nieuwoudt's future wife, Anna van Wyk?

Isaak Nieuwoudt and his wife appear in the muster rolls (Cape District) for freeburghers for the first time in 1725 - one year after their marriage. 3 children are enumerated: 2 sons and 1 daughter. Presumably these are Helena (b1), Gerrit (b3 [*sic*]) and Johannes (b5). Jeremias (b2) and Alida (b4) appear to have died in infancy.

Genealogy is not only about collating and re-arranging the existing church records and transforming or converting these baptismal and marriage details into embarrassment-free genealogies. Church records only reflect acts that conform to the conditions and rules set down by the church. Human behaviour transcends such a confined world. For this reason we need to look beyond the obvious and enquire further as to what might be the reason for Gerrit Nieuwoudt's missing baptism.

The peculiar circumstances pertaining to Gerrit Willemse's forced removal from his own house, shed more light on Gerrit Nieuwoudt's *biological* paternity. The year 1713 not only brought the devastating smallpox epidemic, but also further trials and tribulations to Gerrit Willemse and his unfaithful wife. The marriage of Gerrit Willemse to the Cape-born *halfslagh* **Maria Cornelisse** appears to have been stable until the appearance of the *free black* **Isaak Pieters van de Caeb**. Maria Cornelisse came from an extremely troublesome Cape family. Her father was a white man **Cornelis Claesz** (from Utrecht). Known *in de wandeling* as **Kees de Boer**, he has a reputation for hob-nobbing with the slave women. Her mother was the formidable matriach and freed slave **Catharina van Malabar** (also found as **Catharina van Coromandel** and **Catharina van Bengale**). Before having their union blessed by the church, her parents not only had *voorkinders* together, but also separately. Their genealogical contribution to the early Cape's colonial populace is phenomenal.²

Wine belonging to his wife's sister, **Cornelia Cornelisse** and her second husband **Richard Adolphus** (from Tønder in Slesvig, Jutland, Denmark) had been stolen by his cheating wife's unruly black lover. There appears to have been more than one scuffle at the time as old man **Andries Voormeester** - his wife's stepfather - stated at the trial that the accused had grabbed him and thrown him into the fire merely because he had refused to give him wine.³ Pietersz, when arrested, even broke free from the restraining grip of two judicial officers. It was only after he had stolen the wine that they found him again, this time under the bed of Maria, his *houvrou* who was legal wife to Gerrit Willemse.

This was the final nail in the coffin for a bully who terrorised everyone around him. For four years already he had moved into Maria's home, usurping the place of her husband and appropriating his wife with whom he had had a *seer groote familiariteit*. On one occasion Pietersz had even dragged Willemse by the hair out of his own home. Willemse testified that Isaac Pietersz had appointed himself ... *als meester en voogt, 't geen ... hem*

² Mansell G. Upham, 'The *Soetkoek* Syndrome - the dangers of 'wishful linking' & perpetuating genealogical myths when sharing ancestors and genealogical data, *Capensis*, no. 2 (2001), pp. 29-30.

³ J.Leon Hattingh, *Die Eerste Vryswartes van Stellenbosch 1679-1720*, p. 60.

ondragelijk geweest te zijn ... and that ... twe onegte Bruijne kinderen ... had been born out of the intruder's relationship with his wife.

Isaac Pietersz's social dysfunctionality dominated the trial. The *landdrost Nicolaas van der Heuvel* had to hear that this 29-year old man had been freed from slavery as a child following the death of the free-burgher **Leendert van Gijsselen**. Thereafter, he had been brought up in the household of his deceased owner's concubine, **Maria Willemsz** (from Hamburg) who subsequently had become the wife of the free-burgher **Matthias Diedriks**. After 9 years, however, Pietersz, left her house to *vagabondeeren*. At that stage he was already rebellious and she could ... *met reg* ... call him a *deugniet*.

Charged with ... *diverse quaataardigheeden en ... het steelen van wijn ...*, Pietersz was found guilty and sentenced to be tied to a pole and flogged. Thereafter, he was banished to Robben Island to be put to work but without being in chains.⁴

After being dragged by the hair out of his own house, Gerrit Willems abandoned himself to vagabondising and had to fall back onto the charity of other colonists. Willems later sought succour in the arms of **Anna van Wyk** - if not for a short while, then at least until his death. They would never have been able to marry as Gerrit Willems was still legally married to his adulterous wife.

Thereafter, Anna van Wyk, an unwed mother, became concubine to Isaak Nieuwoudt. Did he help father her other two pre-wedlock children before obtaining his burgher papers and finally getting married in 1724? We know that the **daughter Helena Nieuwoudt** also went by the name **Helena Willemse**.⁵ In all probability, all 3 of Anna van Wyk's *voorkinders* were fathered by Gerrit Willemse but adopted by Isaak Nieuwoudt.

As Gerrit Nieuwoudt was fathered by Gerrit Willemse, we are left with an interesting anomaly: more than half of the people born with the surname **Nieuwoudt** in South Africa mostly descend from **Gerrit Nieuwoudt** - who was only a Nieuwoudt *by adoption*. In effect, only the descendants of his two (half?) brothers, Johannes and Izaak Nieuwoudt Jr. are more likely to be *biological* offshoots of the *stamvader* Isaak Nieuwoudt.

The mystery of Gerrit Nieuwoudt's missing baptism illustrates effectively perhaps, that an individual's family name or surname is not necessarily proof of descent. As genealogists, we need to be reminded that, more often than not, we cannot always know *which stallion jumped the fence ...*

Mansell Upham

⁴ CA: CJ 5 Oorspronklike regsrolle en notule, fol. 57, *Landdrost Stellebosch contra* Isaac Pietersz, 23.9.1713, CJ 782, No 56 & CJ 317 Criminele Processtukken en 1/STB 18/156 Notariële Verclaringe, declarations by Matthijs Diedricks, 16.8.1713, Gerrit Willemsz van Leeuwarden, Andries Voormeester, Jan Botma & Richard Adolphus, 18.8.1713.

⁵ Mansell G. Upham, 'Keeping the gate of Hell: 'subliminal racism' and early Cape carnal conversations between black men and white women, *Capensis*, p. 31.