

## 2017 Roosevelt Inlet Shipwreck: What do we know?

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### *The Maria Johanna*

#### NEWSPAPERS

As previously noted research on this vessel and its history has been slow going. The importance of historic newspapers cannot be underestimated. The first newspaper accounting of a vessel with the name *Maria Johanna*, is in the "Zee-Tyding [Sea-Tidings]" of the April 26, 1779 edition of the *Noordhollandsche Courant*. In this article, a Captain Jan Hendrik Klaassen, of the *de Maria Johanna*, is noted as having arrived in Amsterdam, via the Texel port of entry, coming from Cadiz, Spain. Is this our vessel in question? Consideration that other Dutch vessels have the same name during this time period is obligatory. More research is needed.

A second viable reference found dates to May 2, 1782. It is a notice that appeared in the *Amsterdam Courant*:

"T. Beth Ysbrandsz., H. Beth Tammesz. en J. Beth, Makelaars, zullen op Maandag den 6 May, te Amsterdam in 't Nieuwe Heeren Logement verkopen: Een extra Extraordinair welbezeild FLUIT-SCHIP, genaamd *MARIA JOHANNA*. Commandeur KEMP DRIEWESZ, Lang 115 voet, Wyd 29 voet 2 duim, Hol 12 voet 5 duim; 't Verdek 6 voet 9 duim, de stuurpiegt 9 voet 4 ½ duim, is in 't jaar

1778 een nieuwe Fokke en Bezaans-Mast ingezet, en nieuwe Fokke-Wand en Marsen ongetegt; breider bij den Inventaris, en berigt bij gemelde Makelaars."

This translates:

"On Monday, May 6, at Amsterdam's New Heeren [Gentlemen's] Inn, T. Beth Ysbrandsz., H. Beth Tammesz. and J. Beth, Brokers, will be selling: An extraordinary fine sailing Fluyt Ship, named *Maria Johanna*, Commander Kemp Driewesz., 115' long, 29' 2" wide; 12' 5" hold; the deck 6" 9", the steering deck 9' 4½", and in 1778 a new foresail and mizzen mast were installed and new fore-rigging and top-rigging applied; complete with its inventory, as reported by the above mentioned brokers."

This article identifies the type and the dimensions of this vessel; that it has undergone maintenance, and has its complement of equipment outfitted to sail. Unfortunately, this description did not note its tonnage and its date or location of construction. The ownership of this vessel by these brokers listed cannot be presumed.

Consideration that other Dutch vessels have the same name during this time period must be sustained until direct links can be established. However, assuming these are viable references, information noted below shows two months after this vessel was sold. It was commanded by a single and its last master/captain: Pieter Tjallings Bonk. **[Note:** There are some variations in the spelling of his name but I am confident in their actual identification.] It is also interesting the article references the former "Commander Kemp Driewesz." In tracing this vessel, this Commander was in charge of accompany of whalers who operated in the lower Artic Ocean. More information will be provided when discussion Pieter Tjallings Bonk and his family history.

In the “Zee-Tyding [Sea-Tidings]” of the *Diemer op Watergraafs-Meersche Courant*, published July 17, 1782, and in the July 18<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Hollandsche Historische Courant*, its noted Pieter Tjallings Bonk [Captain], *de Maria Johanna* left the Amsterdam port of entry at Vlieland on July 14<sup>th</sup> for Archangel. Then, four months later, on November 18, 1782, Pieter Tjallings Bonk, Captain of *the Maria Johanna*, is listed as having arrived in Amsterdam’s, via Vlieland port of entry, returning from Archangel.

In the *Diemer op Watergraafs-Meersche Courant*, published January 20, 1783, as well as the January 21<sup>st</sup> edition of the *Amsterdamsche Courant*, there is an advertisement:

“D. H. Coetse, J. Lambers. J.M. Stoltenkamp, J. De Warm and N. Lambers. Makelaars, zullen op Morgen den 21 January 1783, Een party van 140 Baalen beschadigd Moscovisch MAAN HAIR, gelost uit het Schip de Maria Johanna, Schipper Pieter Tjallings Bonk, van Archangel...”

This translates:

“D. H. Coetse, J. Lambers. J.M. Stoltenkamp, J. De Warm and N. Lambers, Brokers, selling 140 bales of damaged Muscovite Mohair (fabric), unloaded from the Ship *Maria Johanna*, Captain Peter Tjallings Bonk, from Archangel.”

The sale of this fabric is 2 months after Bonk returned from Archangel. When commodities couldn’t be disposed of, or in this case damaged, it was a common practice for individuals to auction off these less than desired and/or perfect products.

According to the “Zee-Tyding [Sea-Tidings]” published in the Amsterdam newspaper, the *Nederlandsche Courant*, issued November 5, 1783, Pieter Tjallings Bonk departed Amsterdam via Texel, as captain of the *Maria Johanna*, bound for Philadelphia on November 2, 1783.

Shipping-Intelligence:

Amsterdam on Nov. 2nd, arrived in  
Texel-

Jochem Nueman [captain], the *Henriette Philippina* from  
Curacao. Andries Muller [captain], *Austrian Elizabeth* from - ditto.

Gosfe Ryns [captain], the *Hendrina* - - - London.

Wiggert A. Kleyn [captain], the *Opregte Friendship* Ostende.

The *Wind southeast*, from the *Sea* or *The Southeast wind* from/off the  
sea;

departin

g-

Jan Christiaan Eyk [captain], *de Alexander* – to  
Surinamen. Jan Janfe Eye [captain], the *Catharina*  
*Sophia* – ditto.

Pieter Tjallings Bonk [captain], the *Maria Johanna* to Philadelphia.

Nicolaas Martens [captain], the *Hercules* - -

Lisbon. Otto Hulsberg [captain], the *Guillieme* - -  
ditto.

Tracking its voyage, February 14, 1784, in Philadelphia’s *The Independent Gazetteer of The Chronicle of Freedom*, we read under “Ship News:”

"...*Maria Joana* (sic), Captain Peter Carants Bunks (sic), from Amsterdam...[is] safe at anchor nearly opposite of Lewis-Town."  
It goes on to say, "Ship *Maria*, Kelly, from Amsterdam,...arrived in the bay."

It is interesting to note there was a ship *Maria*, with Captain Kelly, also arrived from Amsterdam, and was bound for Philadelphia. It's history will be noted later.

Also, from the *Independent Gazette; or the New-York Journal Revived*, February 14, 1784, a similar confirmation of the vessel arriving in Delaware Bay, on or before February 7<sup>th</sup>, is provided:

By accounts from Philadelphia of the 7<sup>th</sup>, we have received the following state of the vessels in Delaware Bay: viz.  
Ship St. Andrew, Robinson, from London, at the Sheers; in no danger.  
Brig ———, late Capt. Bassel, from Ostend, nearly opposite Lewis-Town, supposed safe, at anchor.  
Snow Industry, Honeywell, from Bristol, gone to sea, being drove out by the ice under sail; the Captain ashore, but it was supposed the Mate would go for Carolina.  
Brig Franklin, M'Comb, from Jamaica, about three leagues out, and drifting in the ice, but supposed in no danger.  
Ship Brilliant, Watkins, a light transport bound to New-York, for German troops, five months from Stade, and three from Stromness, in Scotland; lays a little north of the Hen and Chickens, and about 500 yards from the shore, in seven fathom water, and in more danger than any of the vessels.  
Ship *Maria Joanna*, Captain P. Carants Bunk, from Amsterdam; lays near the brig from Ostend, and safe.  
A large ship, unknown, under sail, and plying about the edge of the ice.

[Note: "P. Carants Bunk" is Pieter Tjallings Bonk]

By these articles, we can reasonably assume the *Maria Johanna* arrived in Delaware Bay by the end of January or early February. Historically, transatlantic voyages from Amsterdam to Philadelphia would normally average around 8-10 weeks depending on the time of year; particularly considering the weather and sailing conditions. The *Maria Johanna* had to stay in the Delaware for a while. In two other newspaper accounts, this is corroborated:

The *Nederlandsche Courant*, issued April 16, 1784; there is a notation: "Volgens een Brief van Nieu-York dato 16 Febr. was in de Delaware gearriveerd Kapt. Pieter Tjallings Bonk, "de *Maria Johanna*", en nog een ander Schip waar van men de naam niet opgeest, dog zegt in November van hier gezeild te zyn beide van Amst., Kapt. Swart was van Philadelphia na Charlestown gezeild, dog in Virginien masteloos en zeer ontramponneerd binnen gekomen in de Delaware lagen de Schepen alle in het Ys bevrooren, als het dooi weer werd konden die aar wel gevaar hebben; de Winter was zoo streng als bij Menschen geheugen niet geweest is. Vorts lag tot Philadelphia in Lading, Kapt. Inse Douwes, en Kapt. Abraham Thomas, de eerste dag bij eerst open water op hier te zeilen."

This translates:

“According to a letter from New York dated 16 Febr. Captain Pieter Tjallings Bonk, *Maria Johanna*, and another ship, its name is not specified, arrived in the Delaware, it says in November they both sailed from here, Amsterdam. Captain Swart went from Philadelphia to Charlestown and sailed into Virginia mast-less and very damaged, ships that entered in the Delaware are all frozen in ice, when the thaw comes again, there could be danger. The winter has been so severe that men cannot recollect. In addition to lying in Philadelphia with cargo, Capt. Inse Douwes, and Captain Abraham Thomas, intend to sail the first day of open water.”

The *Leydse Courant*, May 16, 1784, provides a similar item:

“Volgens een Brief van Nieu-York in dato 16 Febr. waren in de Delaware Gearriveerd Kapt. P. S. Bonk en nog een ander schip (denkelijk het reeds gemelde van Kapt. Kelly) beide van hier; Kapt. Swart was van Philadelphia na Charlestown (sic) vertrokken, doch in Virginia masteloos en zeer ontramponneerd binnen geloopen; en voorts lagen te Philadelphia in Lading Kapt. Inse Douwes en Abr. Thomas; welke eerste by open water en de laat te July herwaarts zoude vertrekken; voor New York was een Pacquet-Boot, van l’Orient komende, verongelukt; in de Delaware leggen de schepen all in het Ys bevrozen en konden by dooi weer wel gevaar hebben; de winter was daar zo streng als menschen geheugen niet geweest is.”

This translates:

“According to letters from New York dated February 16, there arrived in the Delaware, Capt. P.S. (sic) Bonk and another ship (probably already reported as Capt. Kelly), both from here (Amsterdam); Capt. Swart departed Philadelphia for Charleston, but put in at Virginia mast-less and very damaged; also Capt. Inse Douwes and Capt. Abr. Thomas were laden with cargo in Philadelphia; the first would depart by open water and the latter in July; a Packet boat coming from the Orient for New York, wrecked; in the Delaware lay all the ships in the frozen ice and this could become dangerous with a thaw in the weather; folks do not remember a time when the winter has been so severe.”

According to *The Pennsylvania Gazette* (issued on March 3, 1784), there was “A LIST of Vessels lying in Whore-Kill Road, Feb. 27.” Included in this list were “...ship *Maria*, [Captain] Kelly, Amsterdam; ...[unnamed] Dutch ship, [no captain listed] Amsterdam;...” [ **Note**:This unnamed “Dutch ship” was the *Maria Johanna*, as confirmed by the account found in *The Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer of The Chronicle of Freedom*, February 14<sup>th</sup>, referenced above.] The *Leydse Courant* also published essentially the same letter above in their May 16 issue.

In a newspaper account, *De Opregte Haerlemse Courant*, May 22, 1784, we learn the fate of this vessel:

“Volgens een Brief van Philadelphia van den 8 Maart, was tegen de Bank bij het inkomen der Baar verpletterd het Schip de *Maria Johanna*, gevoerd by Pieter Tjallings Bonk, van hier na Philadelphia gedettineerd, de Supercarga, zyn Klerk, en 2 Man waren aan Land om een Loods, de overige Equipage is met het Schip vergaan, behalven twee Man die zich op een Balk gered hebben, van de Lading is weinig geborgen, en de Brieven zyn weg.”

This translates:

“According to a March 8th letter from Philadelphia, a ship called the *Maria Johanna* was crushed against the shoreline/bank of the Bay. Led by (Captain) Pieter Tjallings Bonk, coming from here (Amsterdam) to Philadelphia, was

detained; the Supercargo, his clerk, and 2 Men were on land. The Pilot and crew, [ship's company] perished with the Ship, except two men were rescued from a cargo beam, little of the cargo has been saved, and all the letters are gone."

A similar article appeared in the *Leeuwarder Courant*, May 25, 1784:

"Amsterdam den 2? Mey. In Brieven van Philadelphia van den 8 Maart laatsteden, word gemeld, dat aan den ingang der Baay tegen de Bank verpletterd is het Schip Maria Johanna, gevoerd by Kaptein Pieter Tjallings Bonk, van hier derwaarts bestemd, het meerendeel der Equipagie is er by ongekomen, alzoo maar twee man zig op een Balk hebben kunnen redden, en vier man, waar by de Super Carga en Klerk, waren aan de Wal on een Lots, dus zyn die mede behouden, van de Goederen is weinig geborgen en de Brieven zyn alle weg."

This translates:

"Amsterdam the 20th of May. In Letters from Philadelphia as of last March 8, it was reported, the ship Maria Johanna, conducted by Captain Peter Tjallings Bonk, was crushed [crashed] against the Bank at the entrance of the Bay, down there the greater part of the Equipagie [Ship's crew/company] were killed, so only two men on a beam were saved, and four men, including the supercargo and clerk, were on land. As the captain, who is responsible to retain the Cargo, little is recovered and all his letters are gone."

From the *Pennsylvania Packet, and General Advertiser*, as well as the *New-Jersey Gazette*, April 6, 1784 and; the *Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser*, April 4, 1784:

**SEVERAL DEATHS, SUFFERED FROM ST. CHRISTOPHERS.**  
We are sorry to hear, that in the night of the 20th instant, the Ship Maria Johanna, captain Pieter Yallings Bonk, from Amsterdam, in a gale of wind was drove ashore on the inside of Cape-Henlopen, where she soon beat to pieces, and all on board, 21 in number, except the supercargo and his clerk, who drifted ashore on a piece of plank, perished.

Another article appears in a series of newspapers including *The New-York Journal, and State Gazette*, March 25, 1784; the *Connecticut Courant, and Weekly Intelligencer*, March 30, 1784; the *Norwich Packet*, April 1, 1784; the *Massachusetts Spy*, April 1, 1784; the *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, April 3, 1784; the *Independent Ledger*, April 5, 1784; the *United States Chronicle*, April 8, 1784:

*Extract of a letter from Philadelphia, dated March 18.*  
"The ship Maria Johanna, of 600 tons, Capt. P. Tjallings Bonk, from Amsterdam to Philadelphia, arrived some time ago in the Delaware, but was driven out again by the ice, and is now entirely lost near the Capes; seven passengers, Captain, and all the crew perished; six passengers escaped, having landed before. The cargo was very valuable, among which, there were 2300 cases of Geneva."

According to this newspaper, this fluyt was listed at 600 tons and while all the documents on board were lost, the cargo is noted to be "...very valuable, among which, there were 2300 (another article noted 2400) cases of Geneva."

With confidence, there is a reference for another *Maria Johanna* vessel being offered for sale. It is an **Admiralty frigate** on Nov. 6, 1783, in Hoorn. It is more than reasonable to assume the former navy frigate sold in Hoorn is not the same vessel under current consideration. The dimensions of the vessels are different, and more pointedly, this sale was scheduled four days after our candidate vessel left Amsterdam. Most certainly, we know our vessel was a "Fluyt" and a vessel could not be readied to sail in that short of time.]

## ARTIFACTS

Artifacts recovered from this wreck add additional support for identifying this vessel as the *Maria Johanna*.

1) Dutch Tobacco pipes: While it possible these Gouda pipes could have been re-exported on the **Severn**, the date ranges of some of these do not synchronize with the timing of the wreck. Research on the maker's marks (signifying ownership and exclusive use) when registering with the Gouda pipe makers' guild suggests a date range of 1783-1790 (Duco 2003, Van der Meulen 2003). There are six examples to be considered: a) Trademark "BS:" was Benjamin Schoute's initial guild registration of this trademark in 1733 and maintained it until either 1736 or 1746. There is a void in the guild records until the trademark was purchased by Andrianus Sparnaaij in **1783**; which he used it until 1818. Located on several decorated pipestems is the abbreviation of Sparnaaij's name. b) The Trademark "Wapen van Den Haag" (Coat of Arms for the City of the Hague). This trademark was in use from 1746 through 1774. The trademark was not used again until Christiaan Eling took it up in **1782**. c) The "Roemer" (German Wine Glass) trademark was in use from 1771 through 1773. It was not used again until **1779** and then last used in **1784**. d) The Trademark for "Crowned S" was in use prior to 1776. Thereafter, it was not in use until 1779 and was in continuous use until the 19th century. e) The trademark "Crowned 23" was in use in from 1730 until 1771. It was not used again until 1779 through 1790. f) Trademark "Zeeuwse Rijksdaalder" (Zealand National Dollar) was in use from 1760 through 1773. There was a void in its use until 1778 and was used until 1798. It then ceased production. These dates of use range from 1779, 1781, 1782 and 1783. This confirming the terminus post quem as not earlier than 1783 and a possible terminus ante quem of 1784 or a little bit later (for the Roemer). It should be noted that tobacco pipes are a traditional time-marker for an archaeological site. Due to their fragile nature, their sensitivity to long term use is considered limited.



Photo of Tobacco Pipe Heel with the "BS" trademark, 1783

2) Dutch Hallmarks on some metal artifacts [e.g. silver and pewter spoons, and tankard lids]: It is possible; however, these hallmarked items may be personal belongings and not cargo. That is, of crew and/or passengers, who were aboard this ship? Presently, more research is needed to see if this is the case.



Photo of Silver Spoon inscribed with "CGR" from the RIS.



Close up photo of the Dutch Hallmark of Bathasar Hampe dating to 1757. Hampe was a silversmith in The Hague, from 1741-1777.)  
Photo courtesy of John Justice.



A pewter hinged lid from a German Blue-Gray Stoneware Jug with a hallmark that appears to be the Coat of Arms for the City of Amsterdam and the initials "IS." Research is needed to identify the maker and its age.

3) Ceramics of Dutch and/or German manufacture: These artifacts are most likely part of the ship stores (items used/consumed during the voyage). These are coarse earthenware types known to be manufactured either in the Dutch western hinterland of Germany or from the Netherlands.



a) The first type of earthenware is Frankfurter Ware (Bartels 1999, Bartels personal communication). This totally flat bottomed, buff paste, beige slip, green or yellow interior glazed ware was sent to The Netherlands via Frankfurt am-Main. It was produced in small communities located on the upper reaches of the Main River and along the Rhine River. This utilitarian cookware was produced for sale at local market fairs for pennies. Merchants in Frankfurt, when loading timbers and other raw materials added this cheap ware to the ships. This ware became popular since there was a change in cooking technologies underway. The change from large open hearth cooking to flat top cooking was becoming a trend. The Dutch Pottery Makers Guild did not authorize its production by Dutch potters until after 1780. The Dutch produced wares differed in the use of red-bodied paste rather than buff. Both vessel types had either yellow or green interior glaze and the only decoration were iron oxide lines located below the exterior lip. These could be a single straight line; a single line and/or a parabolic line intertwined. The glaze slopped over the exterior edge or along the handle is common. Such a ceramic ware was ideal for use on a ship's brick galley. This ceramic can easily be considered "ship's stores" – meant only for crew during the sail; passengers would not have used these coarse wares. This ceramic type has only been found, thus far on one site in central New York State.



the Frankfurter Ware Exterior Rim Fragments with Iron Oxide Decoration Located just below the Rim. Note the Yellow and Green Glazing Occurs only on the Interior

b) Another Dutch coarse earthenware vessel has been identified at the RIS site. No other comparable ware has been identified thus far in the Mid-Atlantic. This is an interior/exterior lead-glazed, red-bodied dish or plate with a raised circular rim and a well formed rim edge. The dish has a deliberate slope as seen in the photo below. Further research will look for indications of use marks; suggesting this may also be considered "ship's stores."



Photo of Lead-glazed, redware dishes recovered from Amsterdam. From Jerzey Gawronski (ed.) (2012) *Amsterdam Ceramics, A city's history and an archaeological ceramics catalogue 1175-2011*: 276.

4) Two personal signets: Two metal signet or personal seals were recovered.

a) The first signet has a distinctively Dutch flair. It has a coronet crown atop a stork with a snake in its mouth and a raised foot holding an orb. There are initials on either side of the image. To the left there is an "A." On the right side, the image is not clear. Given the importance of the Stork (it's the Coat of Arms for the City of the Hague), suggests this is from the Netherlands. More research is needed. The photos below show this signet and the impression.



Photo of the signet showing the inscription in reverse.



Photo of the signet and a molded impression.

b) The second signet is one which has a coronet crown with three initials. Atop the first and last initials are two birds. The initials on this signet are: **“PTB.”** **These coincide with the name of the Captain of the Ship Maria Johanna.**



This artifact is possibly one of the most significant items recovered to suggest this shipwreck is the *Maria Johanna*.

There are other artifacts, most notably Case Bottles recovered. A newspaper reported at least 2300 cases of Geneva were lost. Geneva is "Dutch" or "Holland Gin." Many of these case bottles have marks on the bases which have been identified by experts like Olive Jones to be of Dutch Manufacture. [\[The historical significance needs to be discussed as this was singled out as part of an extremely valuable cargo.\]](#)

Pieter Tjallings Bonk was the Captain. It left Amsterdam in early November, 1783 and landed in the Delaware Bay either late January or early February, 1784. It never made it to Philadelphia due to horrendous winter conditions.