

was the bane of the prosperity of the settlers of New Netherland and the source of nearly all the political evils afflicting them during the West-India Company's administration of the government of the province.

The settlement of more colonists at Midwout largely expanded the area of its cultivated land. The increase of the number of its inhabitants was sufficient to justify the provincial authorities in establishing there, on March 6, 1654, a local court of justice consisting of three magistrates (*schepens*), represented in the persons of Jan Stryker, Jan Snedeker, and Adriaen Hegeman. This court sat three-fourths of the year at Midwout and the remaining fourth at Amersfoort until March 31, 1661, when each place was granted a local court. David Provoost, who, in 1654, was sheriff (*schout-fiscaal*) of the district of Breukelen, was then ordered to include Midwout and Amersfoort in his bailiwick. On January 25, 1656, Pieter Tonneman succeeded him in that office.<sup>1</sup>

The long distance between Midwout and New Amsterdam, which the people of the village were obliged to traverse in going to and returning from Sunday and feast-day services at the church within the walls of Fort Amsterdam, led to the organization of a religious society at the settlement, on February 9, 1654. A request was then sent to the Classis of the Reformed Church at Amsterdam, Holland, to select a suitable pastor for it. Shortly thereafter the Reverend Johannes Theodorus Polhemius (written by him "Polheijm"), arrived in New Netherland, who had been compelled to leave his pastorate at Itamarcas, Brazil, in consequence of the abandonment of that country by the West-India Company in favor of the Portuguese. He was then fifty-six years old. Meanwhile his wife had gone to Holland to try to obtain from the Lords-Directors of the West-India Company the arrears of salary due her husband by that corporation. Finding that his services as a school-teacher and a minister were available, the people of Midwout and those of Amersfoort engaged him to instruct their children and to officiate as pastor of the two congregations.<sup>2</sup>

The first steps taken to erect a building in which religious services might be conducted regularly by him at Midwout, were those consequent upon the authorization, on December 17th, that year, of the Reverend Johannes Megapolensis, "minister of the Gospel in the city of New Amsterdam," Jan Snedeker, and Jan Stryker "to make public and private contracts" for the building of "a house of about sixty or sixty-five feet in length, twenty-eight in width, and twelve to fourteen feet high under the crossbeams, with an extension in the rear, in which a chamber might be partitioned off for the preacher."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Register of New Netherland. 1626-1664. By E. B. O'Callaghan, pp. 76, 77, 42.

<sup>2</sup> A Manual of the Reformed Church in America. 1628-1876. By the Rev. Edward Tanjore Corwin, D.D. 1879, p. 406.

<sup>3</sup> Documents relating to the colonial history of the state of New York, vol. xiv., pp. 294, 310.