

---

To Europeans, land was a commodity, an item which could be bought and sold and assigned to an individual owner. Native Americans, did not appreciate the notion of land as a commodity, especially not in terms of individual ownership. As a result, Indian groups would sell land, but in their minds had only sold the rights to use the lands. It seems, in fact, that when they sold land to the Dutch they did not give up their right to occupy it either. The famous purchase of Manhattan Island for sixty guilders loses some of its impact as a great real estate deal when one considers that the Indians probably never intended to give it up, but rather to “lease” it for Dutch use while they continued to occupy it...

Previously published in *De Halve Maen* 72, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 75–83, reprinted in Margriet Lacy, ed., *A Beautiful and Fruitful Place: Selected Rensselaerswijck Papers*, vol. 3 (Albany: New Netherland Institute, 2013): 41–48

---

