



Opening Statements: Law, Jurisprudence, and the Legacy of Dutch New York

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Explores the influence of Dutch law and jurisprudence in colonial America.

No society can function without laws, that set of established practices and expectations that guide the way people get along with one another and relate to ruling authorities. Although much has been written about the English roots of American law and jurisprudence, little attention has been paid until recently to the legacy left by the Dutch. In Opening Statements, a broad spectrum of eminent scholars examine the legal heritage that New Netherland bequeathed to New York in the seventeenth century. Even after the transfer of the colony to England placed New York under English Common Law rather than Dutch Roman Law, the Dutch system of jurisprudence continued to influence evolving American concepts of governance, liberty, women's rights, and religious freedom in ways that still resonate in today's legal culture.

"Opening Statements addresses only a short chapter in the long history of America. Its judgments will not be without dispute, but then, as the eminent Dutch historian Pieter Geyl once wrote: 'History is an argument without end.' There can be no doubt, however, as to the value of those seeds of freedom that were deeply planted in New Netherland. They produced a revolutionary harvest that causes us to appreciate what the Dutch inspired. A small country, the Netherlands—yes—but always a powerful ally for America in the unending struggle for a well-ordered society where freedom and justice prevail." — from the Foreword by William J. vanden Heuvel

Albert M. Rosenblatt is a Judge (Ret.) of the New York Court of Appeals, a Judicial Fellow at New York University Law School, of counsel to the law firm of McCabe & Mack, and President of the Historical Society of the Courts of the State of New York. His books include The Judges of the New York Court of Appeals: A Biographical History.

Julia C. Rosenblatt is the coauthor (with Frederic H. Sonnenschmidt) of Dining with Sherlock Holmes: A Baker Street Cookbook. Together, the Rosenblatts coauthored Historic Courthouses of the State of New York: A Study in Postcards.



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