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Regional Dutch history is focus of NBC documentary

“Uncovering America’s Forgotten Colony: The New Netherland Project,” a 30-minute documentary film will air at 7:30 tonight on News Channel 13

For several decades, a devoted group of scholars has labored quietly and meticulously amid the stacks of the New York State Library in Albany to unlock secrets of an uncommonly rich period in the Empire state’s past. Their field of study, the long-gone Dutch colony of New Netherland from 1609 to 1664, which included Albany (Fort Orange) and Manhattan (New Amsterdam).

A unique era that featured historical figures, Henry

Hudson, who 400 years ago discovered the river that bears his name, Peter Minuit, who contrary to popular belief, didn’t actually purchase Manhattan for \$24, and Peter Stuyvesant, a peg-legged leader who ruled the new colony with an iron hand. It was a turbulent time that remains a vague and often misconstrued mystery to most Americans.

The colony’s heart was Manhattan, but it also included what became the states of New York, Delaware, New Jersey and Connecticut. It was a wild and forbidding corner of the planet, occupied by disciplined, hard-nosed strivers with a single, unwa-

vering goal — to carve fruitful lives out of a remote, unsettled region.

Their hopes, dreams, plans and clashes are documented in Dutch in the centuries-old scraps of paper deciphered and translated by Charles Gehring and his scholarly colleagues, who have been unveiling the myriad secrets of that fascinating time and place.

This documentary chronicles this crucial work and the nature of life during this time as it reveals a vital, vibrant melting pot of transplanted Europeans from many nations joined together in a daily struggle for life and prosperity.