

Merwick, Donna. **Death of a notary: conquest and change in Colonial New York.** Cornell, 1999. 281p bibl index afp ISBN [0-8014-3608-7](#), \$35.00. **Outstanding Title!** Reviewed in 2000jan CHOICE.

For Native Americans, Dutch settlement of New Netherland wrought tremendous social change. When conquered New Netherland became New York, an equally dramatic transformation of Dutch Colonial life occurred. *Death of a Notary* illustrates the power of colonialism by carefully examining the life of an ordinary Dutch settler, Adriaen Janse van Ilpendam. After leaving Holland as a young man and spending time in Manhattan, van Ilpendam eventually settled in Albany, where he became a notary. Abundant documentation from his life as notary, record keeper, and archivist enabled Merwick (Center for Cross-Cultural Research, Australian National Univ.) to carefully reconstruct daily life in 17th-century Albany and van Ilpendam's individual experience. The 1664 British conquest forced adaptation to foreign authority and consequently shattered lives. Of those turned upside down by English language and ways, van Ilpendam manifested the clearest signs of ruin and depression. As a man of public records and official transactions, he in effect became strangled by his native tongue. He committed suicide in 1686. Although England purportedly took the colony without force, Merwick's book beautifully shows that casualties still resulted. This outstanding contribution to Colonial social history is highly recommended for all undergraduate and graduate history collections. -- *R. J. Palin, St. Thomas University*