THE FONDA FAMILY

"Mohawk Dutch" from Italy.

The ancestors of (6) Abraham Fonda (1744-1834) have been traced back to (1) Douw Fonda, who lived in Holland. Now more detailed history can be given, through recent research, of the descendants of (1) Douw Fonda. Eleven generations may be traced along a multitude of lines, for over 300 years, and the Fonda families of Schenectady and the Mohawk Valley, historically furnish a long list in each of the Fonda generations in American from 1642 to the present time.

Origin of the Family.

The Rensselaer-Bowil papers say that, (1) Douw Fonda was a Frisian, and Tacitus says that the Frisians dwelt along the coast of the North sea. They were converted to Christianity before A.D. 800.

The family Fonda was originally from the Republic of Genoa, Italy. The Marquis of Fonda was originally from the Republic of Genoa, Italy. The Marquis de Fonda was one of the leaders of a revolution in Genoa, having for its object the over-turning of the aristocratical government, and putting the election of the Doge and Senate, into the hands of the people at large. The Doge (= duke) was the duke of chief magistrate. Our Fonda ancestor was an early republican, and must have lived there, between 1339, when the first Doge was elected, and 1528 when the Dogate ceased. Baron de Fonda was unsuccessful, in his attempt, and fled from the country, taking refuge in Amsterdam, Holland, whence his descendants, Jellis Douwese Fonda, emigrated to American in 1642, and had grants of land from the Dutch government, settling in or near the present city of Albany, N.Y.

There is a perhaps less credible tradition also, that the Fondas were Huguenots and fled from France to Holland after the massacre of St. Bartholemew's night, Aug. 26, 1572.

There is another tradition that they fled to Spain on account of persecution or followed the Duke of Alva to Holland. It is also said that they belonged to the royal house of Spain, fled to Italy, because of religious persecution, and came later to Holland. Possibly they fled from Italy to France, and from France to Holland. The form of the family name is Latin, and therefore, similar in French, Italian, and Spanish, indicating the Latin origin of the family, probably in Italy.

The Fondas were Dutch Reformed Protestants when they emigrated to America, and must have been among the first converts of the Reformation. Their descendants are widely scattered throughout the United States, and many are living near their pioneer homes in Eastern New York.

The family name is taken from a deep valley in the Apennines, about 12 miles from the city of Genoa, called Fonda, a name which means bottom, deep, fountains, etc. It is said that, in the early part of the last century the estate was still in the possession of a branch of the family, the Count de Fonda, and there are many of the name, in the various parts of the Genoese territories. Some of the family may have known Columbus in Genoa.
The coat of arms is: "argent Azure and Gules, on a pale Or, between four heraldic roses Argent, seeded Or and Barbed Vert, a lion rampant per fesse of the second and first."

"CREST: out of a Marquis Coronet, an armed arm, the hand holding a sword, all proper. Supporters: on the dexter side, a Lion Gules, having one helmet, surmounted with a plume of three ostrich feathers, sable, and on the sinister side a Lion Sable, with helmet and plume of the Ostrich feathers argent."

The lion, in the coat of arms, signifies that the ancestors to whom it was granted, was commander in a victorious engagement with an enemy.

The coronet, in the crest, denotes the rank he held. The arm, in the armor, indicates that he had overcome a foreign Knight, by the sword. The plumbed helmet, on the Supporters, being the badge of the principality of Pistoja, now a part of Tuscany, Italy. The inference is the victory, which was gained against that place. It is about 100 miles S.E. of Genoa.

A coat of arms is a sign of noble birth, and a mark of distinction and honors won by an ancestor. Hence the Fonda family is of noble ancestry. While in the United States of America, there is no law, or registry of a coat of arms, therefore not recognized except as an emblem of antiquity, and only as a part of our democratic set-up.

(2) Jelis Douwese Fonda (1604-1682) emigrated to America from Holland in 1642. His name, Douwese implies that he was the son of (1) Dou Fonda (1580-?) who lived in Amsterdam, Holland. The Dutch name Douw, so common in the family, and a common Frisian name, indicates a relationship to the family of Gerardus Douw, the famous painter, who was also a Frisian and a brother of (2) Hester Douwese Jans (1615-1690), the wife of (2) Jelis Douwese Fonda.

(2) Capt. Volkert Janse Douw, the great grandfather of Volkert P. Douw, the first mayor of Albany, N.Y., was also probably a relative of (2) Hester Jansz. (2) Capt. Volkert fled from Holland in 1641 to escape persecution and was likely related to Jan Andrasse Douw, alias Cuper. All must have been among the early converts of the Reformation which began in 1516.

(2) Jelis Douwese Fonda was a whaler. The earliest record of him is in Rensselaerswyck, (now Albany, N.Y.) when on Oct. 19, 1651, the court gave him permission to distill liquor in Greenbush, in a house of Evert Pels, near the brewery on business considered right then, but which his descendants would now annihilate. He was in Beverwyck (Albany) in 1654. His wife (2) Hester won a petty lawsuit, concerning a petticoat in 1656.

(2) Jelis Douwese Fonda had 2 children:--
(3) Douwese Jelis (1640-Nov. 24, 1700): and
Greetien (1642?)--

From here on the Fonda family tree ce eleven generations is built—when and if completed—should prove to be of great historic value in the Genealogical History of Schenectady and the Mohawk Valley.
Dou, Gerard, was born at Leyden in 1613, in the same year and the same city which had the glory of claiming Rembrandt as citizen.

- His father, DOUWE JANSLON DE VRIES ARENTSVELT, who was a glazier (Frisian art of colored glass work,—Italian art glass setting) allowed his son to follow the path to which the boy's instinct led him, and apprenticed him in 1622, to the studio of the engraver, BARTHOLOMEUS DOLENDO. Here young Gerard spent some time in mastering at the art of drawing. After quitting the engraver's desk he went, in 1624, into the workshop of PIETER KOUWENHOVEN, a painter on glass, and in 1628 he entered the studio of the great Rembrandt Van Ryn, but he borrowed little of his master's style and manner. Dou's talent was all his own; his pictures, though small, were superb specimens of the art, finished with care, and true to nature.

After setting up for himself, Dou is reported to have worked at portrait painting; but his manner was too slow and laboured to please his sitters, and he then took as subjects for his paintings the scenes of humble industry that the neighbouring market-place afforded, and interiors graced by buxom maids.

No details have been handed down to us of Dou's life. It is probably passed happily and quietly at his work. He resided—with the exception of two gaps from 1651 to 1657, and again from 1668 to 1672—in his native city. That he was a prosperous man is to be inferred from the large sums for which he sold his paintings. The wealthy connoisseur Van Spring gave Dou an annual donation of a thousand florins merely to be allowed to have the first choice of pictures that the artist had completed at the close of every year. Besides the annual grant, Van Spring paid the ordinary price like any other purchaser for the pictures which he chose.

Gerard Dou died at Leyden in 1675, and was buried in the Church of St. Peter. Among his pupils and followers were: FRANS VAN MIERIS, SCHALCEN, GABRIEL, METSYS, and VAN SLINGERLAND

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