

# Drinking and Gambling in New Amsterdam

THE SIX-INCH-DIAMETER SCROLL-HANDLED DELFT POSSET POT OR LOVING cup shown on the first page of this story was one of many tavern-related artifacts found within the confines of a small early eighteenth-century building at the Broad Financial Center site. Possets were made of hot milk curdled with ale, wine, or other liquors, and infused with spices. Most often associated with celebratory occasions, possets were also used to nourish the sick. The curd, floating above the liquor, was eaten with a spoon, and the liquid below was either sucked or poured from the spout.

The whistle at right, which was carved from a broken pipe, might have been used for entertainment in the city's taverns. Mid- to late-seventeenth century whistles were also recovered at Fort Orange (Albany), leading archaeologists to speculate that these objects might have been traded (along with other goods) to Native Americans in return for furs.

The gambling tokens at right could have been used in the popular board games of the time. These included backgammon, cribbage, and pachisi. These clear, lead-glazed, red earthenware tokens were recovered from the earlier of the two Kierstede privies (circa 1647-1680) located on Pearl Street.

The typical seventeenth-century Rhenish drinking glass fragments (below) include forest-green-colored, raspberry-shaped prunts made of Waldglas that are identical to those used on goblets found in the Netherlands. The fragment of green glass roemer (goblet) with two applied raspberry prunts and a coil wound foot, dating from after 1630, was recovered from a privy associated with a small house owned by Jacob Haie, circa 1653. The use of these Dutch drinking vessels suggests that many residents of New Amsterdam were attempting to replicate the lifestyle found at home in the Netherlands.

This seventeenth-century whistle was carved from a broken clay tobacco pipe stem. It was recovered from a red brick privy located on property owned by Dr. Hans and Sara Kierstede.



These broken shards of pottery were deliberately reshaped and used as gaming pieces or gambling tokens in New Amsterdam's taverns.



Drinking glass fragments include raspberry-shaped prunts used to decorate goblets or roemers and part of a lined or milled beaker used in a drinking game in which a player would drink down to the milled line on the glass, then pass it on to the next player, and so on.





Playing board games was a popular way to socialize in the Netherlands, as shown in the painting, "Tric Trac Players in an Interior" (ca. 1646-1679) by Jan Steen. Peter Stuyvesant tried to ban the playing of tric trac and other games on the Sabbath.



**Marbles and shooters,**  
**seventeenth century,**  
**Netherlands, Germany or**  
**England, salt-glazed stoneware.**  
Marble games were popular in  
Nieuw Amsterdam and early  
British New York. Dutch marble-  
makers were called knickerbockers,  
a term that came to represent  
descendents of the Dutch  
colonists or, in fact, any New  
Yorker. The New York "Knicks"  
basketball team dons blue and  
orange, the colors of the Dutch flag.  
*89.3.441-448, 89.3.464, 89.3.466-473*