

SPECULATION 1791- > JOHANNA JACOB A 1826 - 1830

The name of the ship was JOHANNA JACOB A. Her master was Pieter Jan Spiliard, also known as Pierre Jean Spiliard. He was born in Dunkirk in 1788, but meanwhile lived at Antwerp, now Belgium but between 1813 and 1830 part of the (Northern and Southern) Netherlands, hence the bilingual Christian names.

The history of the vessel named SPECULATION starts in 1791, when she must have been built in Sweden as a frigate. Who the shipbuilder was and at what city we have not yet been able to find out. The descriptions frigate and pink are often mixed up, but anyway all official Dutch documents call the ship a pink.

The ship's dimensions were 28.20 x 7.75 x 3.70 metres length / beam / depth. She was made of oak wood and had two decks, with a raised quarterdeck of approx. 1.70 metre. She had three masts and measured some 320 tons. We know of two Swedish masters: Captain S. Bohn (1804-1805) and Captain Lars Broberg (1808-1810).

In November 1810, whilst sailing en route from Stockholm to an unknown destination, the ship was attacked, probably in the North Sea, by the ship POURVOYEUR, a French privateer based at Dunkirk. As a prize the ship was escorted to Amsterdam, where she arrived on 2nd of December 1810. At that time our country was under control of the French Emperor Napoleon, so the privateer must have felt 'at home' in Amsterdam. The cargo she carried consisted of 6,092 deals, 4,904 staves of Swedish iron, both flat and square, 15 drums with tar and 1 with pitch. Probably the Court of Amsterdam conceded in spring 1811 that the seizure was lawful, where after on 4th of June 1811 both the cargo and the ship were sold in auction. The owners of the privateer, Emmery and Van Hee of Dunkirk, became the owners of the SPECULATION. On 27th March 1812 the vessel became officially French. However, because the English fleet fighting Napoleon had blocked the coastline, she could not leave Amsterdam for fear of being confiscated immediately.

Soon after the Northern Netherlands had been liberated from the French in November 1813 the SPECULATION was bought in May 1814 by a consortium headed De Bordes & Stijger, Amsterdam. Having been built outside the Netherlands extensive repairs were required during 1814 and part of 1815 to enable the owners to obtain a license to sail her under Dutch flag.

She performed her first roundtrip to Surinam still in 1815. She had a very rough trip home and lost her main mast and her mizzen (the smaller mast towards the poop). Once arrived at the roadstead leading to Amsterdam the pilots could not get out to take her in. After a couple of days waiting the master decided to cut the rope with anchor and seek shelter, sailing with the s.w. wind to the North-East to finally arrive at Cuxhaven at the entrance of the river Elb. On 11th of January the ship proceeded to Glückstadt for repairs, but having arrived before the port it turned out that there was a lot of ice, so she had to move on to Hamburg. Some 1½ mile before arrival she grounded in the river and got stuck until 26th of January. In the meantime the SPECULATION had been lightened with the help of five barges that delivered the goods in undamaged condition to a rented warehouse at Hamburg. Once the ship was free again she encountered adverse winds so was still unable to proceed to Hamburg. Finally all problems were solved.

Until she arrived at Amsterdam on 7th of November 1825 she had sailed up and down to Surinam. On 30th January 1826 she was sold to Buys de Bordes & Jordan of Amsterdam. The purchase price was 12,500 guilders, a substantial sum given the age and the prevailing economic circumstances. Under Captain J.C. Kat she performed under her new name JOHANNA JACOBA in 1826 one trip from Archangel to Amsterdam, likely with grain or timber. During 1827 she probably laid idle because the business was so poor.

On 26th of January 1828 Captain Spilliard purchased the pink JOHANNA JACOBA on a 50/50 basis with his partner Jan Kroon, Amsterdam, the latter being a shipping agent and the book- keeper. The ship's name was unchanged.

The purchase price was 4,000 Dutch guilders, a hefty price fall comparing the 12,500 only two years earlier, probably reflecting the prevailing market conditions.

Captain Spilliard received his Certificate of Registration (the 'passport' of the ship) on 20th February 1828, so was allowed to go to sea. The ship also received a so called Turkish Passport, a document that had to be paid for and was valid for one round trip, so that privateered at the high seas would leave the ship alone. The premium depended on the destination: Portugal was cheaper than Brazil, let alone the Dutch Indies, now Indonesia.

JOHANNA JACOBA sailed from Amsterdam with 16 members of crew on 28th of April 1828, to arrive at Rio de Janeiro on 15th of July. The ship had sailed with ballast for stability purposes, but also with 318 Prussian emigrants onboard. Because there was no true passenger accommodation with cabins all of them had to stay in the ships hold, probably in the tweendeck, the lower hold being filled with ballast. During passage seven travellers lost their lives. On the other hand three new babies were born.

After having delivered the Prussians in Rio the ship left for Pernambuco on 28th of August to load a cargo of sugar for Antwerp, Rotterdam or Amsterdam. There were also two gentlemen onboard as passengers.

In 1829, whilst on her way with a cargo of linseed from Alexandria, Egypt, to Vlaardingen, Holland, the ship got heavily damaged at sea and at the end of December had to call at Cephalonia, Greece for repairs. Whilst trying to enter the port she grounded in the entrance, was freed and finally was repaired. On 30th of June 1830 she arrived at Hellevoetsluis, destined for Vlaardingen, but more likely Dordrecht, both very close to Rotterdam.

Apparently she had arrived at the end of her commercial life, to which the sea damage and subsequent grounding in Greece may have attributed. The masts, tackle and gear were taken off and on 8th of September JOHANNA JACOBA was put up for sale in public auction at Dordrecht in Hotel De Gouden Leeuw (the Golden Lion) to be sold to a ship breaker.

Sources:

NATIONAL Archive, the Hague, entrance number 2.08.01.07, various Certificates of Registry
Archive of Amsterdam, filenumber 5081-7157-1814/15-23

Archive of Amsterdam, filenumber 5081-7156-1818-168

Archive of Amsterdam, filenumber 5074-1419-1821-31

Archive of Amsterdam, filenumber 5074-1419-1826-20

Archive of Amsterdam, filenumber 5074-1419-1828-4

Lloyd's Register of Ships online

Mr. Roger Müller, Brazil

Mr. Auwert Dijkstra, Marhisdata

Newspapers:

Amsterdamsche Courant

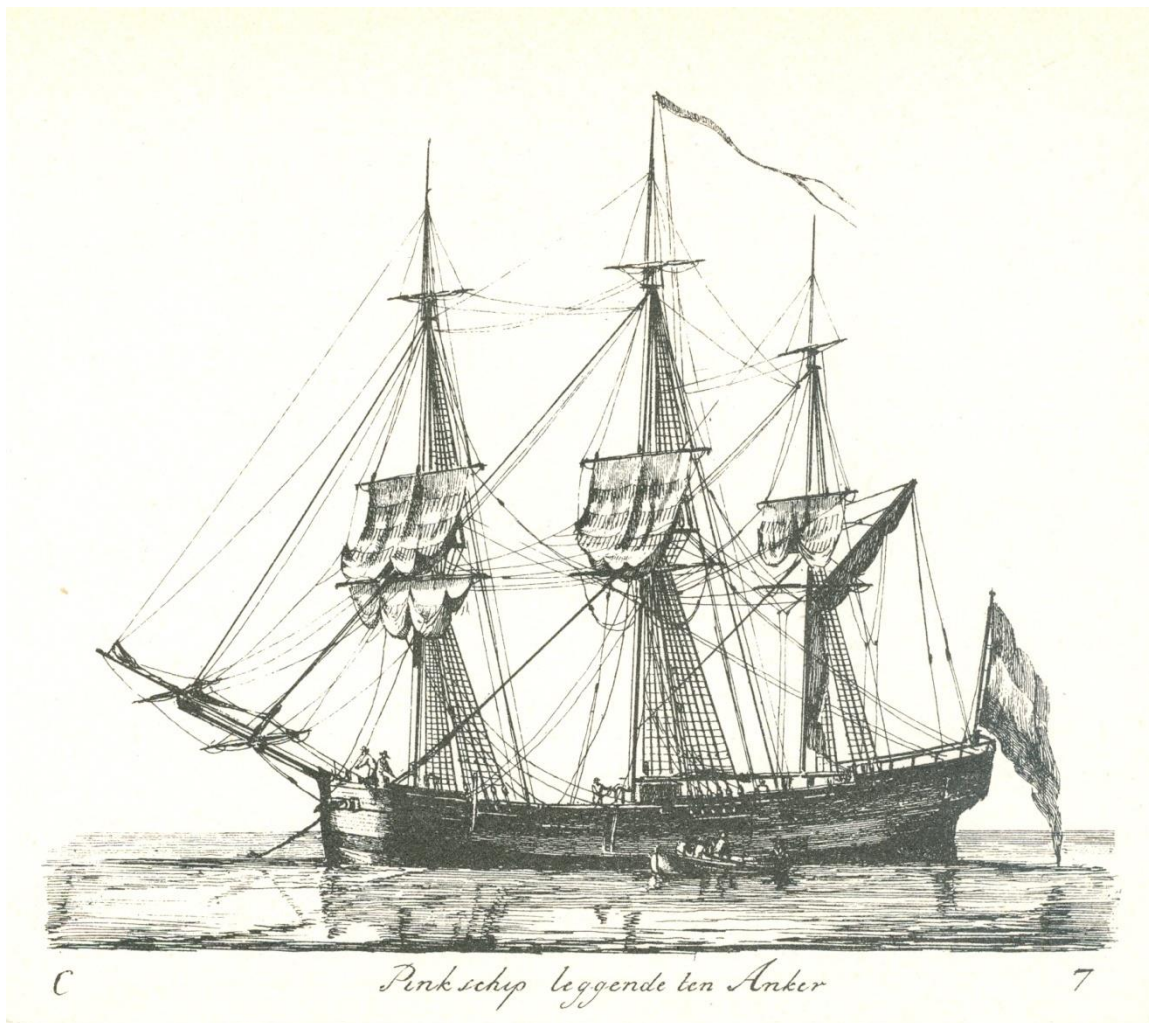
Courier van Amsterdam

Dordrechtsche Courant

Haagsche Courant

Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant

Rotterdamsche Courant



Engraving by G. Groenewegen 1789

Stichting Maritiem-Historische Databank
Rotterdam, 4th of May 2015

G.J. Mulder, secretary